Voices of the East

A COLLECTION OF EDITORIALS PUBLISHED IN VOICE OF THE EAST THRISSUR DURING 1968-1998

MAR APREM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem (formerly George Mooken) was born in Trichur, Kerala, India, in June 1940. Educated in India, England, and America, he specialised in the field of Church History. He was the President of the Church History Association of India.

He holds two master's degree in Church History, one from the United Theological College, Bangalore (M. Th, of Serampore, 1966) and the other from the Union Theological Seminary, New York (S. T. M. degree, 1967). He was a candidate for Doctor of Theology (Th. D.) degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, U. S. A. when he was made bishop in Bagdad, Iraq in 1968. Later he earned his D. Th. degree from Serampore University, near Calcutta.

Ordained a deacon on June 25, 1961, he became a priest on the day he completed twenty five years of age on 13 June, 1965. He was consecrated Bishop on 21st September, 1968 and promoted as a Metropolitan eight days later in Bagdad.

His Biography appears in the International Who's Who of intellectuals, Vol. 6, Cambridge. The International directory of distinguished leadership, first Edition, U. S. A. and others.

He was given "Men of Achievement" Award of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England in 1984. and the 'Medal of Merit' of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre, Venice for his cultural and ecumenical achievements.

Since 1968 He is the Head of the Church of the East in India with his headquarters in Trichur. He is active in several religious and social organisations all over India.

VOICES OF THE EAST

VOICES OF THE EAST
(English) Editorials

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VOICES OF THE EAST

A collection of editorials

Dr. MAR APREM

THRISSUR
1998

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FOREWORD

'Voices of the East' is a collection of Editorials written by H.G. Mar Aprem in the English bimonthly the 'Voice of the East' during the thirty years from 1968 to 1998. They have been carefully selected and edited. The real value of these 'Voices' is that they contain the author's responses to the realities of the modern situation. The wide variety of subjects treated in these editorials reflects the great variety of the author's interests and the real texture of his views about persons and events.

The author of these editorials is a keen observer, and he looks at the spectacle of life with open-eyed wonder and curiosity. So, when he writes of political events or social changes or of religious movements, he writes dispassionately, and the sanity of his views is perhaps the most admirable of the virtues of these editorial explorations.

The 'Voice of the East' conveys the views of the Church of the East about what should be the Christian way of fighting the forces of irreligion; views about what should be the true Christian agenda in contemporary times. He is a good doctor who not only diagnoses the disease correctly but prescribes the right kind of medicine. The author of these Editorials has not only very ably diagnosed the disease of modern times but prescribed the right remedy for the malady.

These editorials do not have what may be called literary excellence or elegance; but they have an attractive felicity of expression that alternates between the humorous and the serious, but never between the tawdry and the pompous. Their author's style is free from deliberate padding and ornamentation. So, it is impressive and forceful. His small, simple sentences, and his small simple words- they create a wonderful, beautiful effect. His purpose is not to create effect with the help of stylistic gymnastics, but to say things in a simple, matter-of-fact manner. In these 'Voices' therefore we have a near-perfect fusion of simplicity, sanity and curiosity.

Anchangady, Thrissur - 5
13 July 1998

MAR TIMOTHEUS
Metropolitan

PREFACE

'Voices of the East' is a collection of Editorials, one hundred and one in number, selected from over two hundred, written during the thirty years from 1968 to 1998 in the 'Voice of the East' published from Thrissur as a magazine of the Church of the East in India. The 'Voice of the East' was a bilingual monthly. Now, it is a bimonthly published in English only, as it is found to be nearly impossible to secure articles in the Syriac language on a regular basis.

There is nothing extraordinary about these Editorials. In fact, there is some perceptible incompleteness about most of them and their incompleteness is mainly due to the very limited space available for the editorial page, usually one page, which allows but little scope for an elaborate treatment of any editorial subject. These editorials are, therefore, capsules, but it is not too much to say that they cover a wide variety of subjects.

The 'Voice of the East' carries both news and views; news about the Church of the East and the views of the Church of the East about what this brave new world is trying to and not to do. The 'Voice of the East' as a magazine of the Church of the East in India attempts in a humble way to make its readers aware of the responses of the Church to the realities of the contemporary situation. These 'Voices' are thus intended to create in the readers an awareness of their times and of the need for diagnosing the ills of modern society from a modern point of view.

Those of these Editorials written in the early seventies contain the thoughts and concerns and hopes of a young man

who became a Metropolitan at the age of twenty-eight. It is for the reader to judge how many of these 'Voices' are sweet and how many sour and see where their sweetness and sourness lie. As a better judge than the writer it is also his part to see and say whether the 'Voices' of the eighties and ninenties show improvement of any kind.

I thank most warmly H.G. Mar Timotheus Metropolitan, Patriarchal Delegate for the Church of the East in India, for his Foreword, which presents in an inimitable manner an admirable fusion of analysis, appreciation and appraisal. My humble thanks are also due to Prof. K.A. Ignatius, Retired Professor of English St. Thomas College, my alma mater who has been kind enough to listen to these 'Voices' and offer his well-meant and valuable comments and suggestions.

My thanks are also due to Deacon Pauly Chirayath, Manager of Mar Narsai Press, for his initiative to get this book printed in time. Andrews Computer Graphics deserves special mention for its pains-taking work in designing the cover. I express my thanks to my secretary Deacon Jojo Anto B.Com., B.D. who assisted me in collecting the editorials published in the Voice of the East during the last three decades.

Thrissur - 1
13 July 1998

MAR APREM METROPOLITAN

1

NEW YEAR

As we are entering the new year 1970, it is appropriate that we should ask for your co-operation for the continued publication of the "Voice of the East" which is the only medium of communication for the members as well as friends of the Church of the East. Though it is published from India, it is meant to be an international publication giving news of the activities of the Church of the East all over the globe. Therefore, it should continue to serve our readers for ever and ever.

We have done our best during 1969 to serve the needs of its readers. We have published scholarly articles to cater to the needs of those in the academic field, those of other churches who are interested in keeping in touch with the literature of this ancient Church. We also tried to convey to our readers the news about the growth and development of the Church of the East in various countries. Of course, we tried to avoid the controversies and perhaps, we may be blamed by some for the "black out" on some news. Certain matters of the Church of the East in India have been already brought to the court and we have tried not to prejudice the court by our publication. Further we tried to be ecumenical in our outlook in regard to the developments in sister Churches.

Dear readers, we continue to serve you. We hope that you will tell about this magazine to your friends. By the way, if you have not paid your subscription of 1970, please do it soon. Thank you.

January 1970

2

LENT

This year we will have the Eastern Easter on 26th April. Let us all observe the days of Lent in all earnestness. Let us control our bodies for the good of our souls.

The practice of Lent dates back to the early centuries of the Christian era. What Irenaeus mentioned in his letter to Pope Victor (A.D. 189-190), has been quoted by Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, V.24 "Some think they ought to fast a single day, but others two, others again even more." In 'Didache' we read about fast in preparation for Easter Baptisms.

There was great variety in the observance of the Lent in various parts of Christendom. Some observed seven weeks excepting Sundays. We fast because our Lord fasted and taught us an example. The fast of our Lord was for forty days.

In our Church we observe Lent for complete seven weeks and we call it the fifty days' fast. Because Easter is on the fiftieth day since the commencement of what we call 'Soma'(Lent). It is abstinence rather than fasting. We abstain from flesh, fish, milk, egg, ghee; and live on rice and vegetables. Our Church is one of the few denominations which adheres strictly to the regulations regarding abstinence.

The preparation for Lent is two-fold. One is spiritual and the other is physical. For spiritual preparation devotional meetings are held in the Church of Fridays and Sundays. Lent calls us to repent and return to the Lord.

March 1970

3

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

In a recent report on the withdrawal of American troops from Cambodia, President Richard Nixon of the U.S.A. emphatically stated that his objective was negotiated peace.

Without interfering with the political issues, one can listen to the message applicable to every situation. He says : "I say the time has come to negotiate. There is nothing to be gained in waiting." He adds, "Sooner or later, peace must come. It can come now, through negotiated settlement that is fair to both sides and humiliates neither. Or it can come months or years from now, with both sides having paid the further price of protracted struggle."

Not only in political issues but also in several church affairs peace is not considered a virtue now. Some leaders do not like attempts for settlement. They want to get their wishes agreed to by the opposite party. They expect a total surrender from their opponents.

Quite often the people in the pew do not realise the evil desires of the powers that be. The leaders confuse their followers in order to delay a peaceful settlement.

As for the costly court cases in our Church it can be stated echoing President Nixon's sentiments that our people "have endured an unspeakable weight of suffering for a generation. And they deserve a better future."

August 1970

4

MAR TIMOTHEUS

On April 30, 1945 Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan of Malabar and India passed away in his adopted land, India. Though twenty six years have passed since that event, his memory has not faded from the minds of his admirers all over the world. He belonged to the whole Assyrian community scattered throughout the world.

Born in the little village of Mar Bishu in Urumiah Abimalek, the youngest son of the parish priest, was entrusted to the care of the missionaries of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Rev. W.H. Browne and A.J. Maclean). The young boy, though not always in good health, learned English and Aramaic well. He was ordained a deacon on July 7, 1903. Ordained a priest on September 21, 1903 and raised to the rank of an archdeacon on May 30, 1904, he was consecrated a Metropolitan on 15 December 1907 after he had served as an Archdeacon assisting the Patriarch Mar Benjamin Shimum (d.1918).

Though not yet thirty at the time of his consecration as Metropolitan, he was nine years older than his consecrator the Patriarch. Mar Timotheus arrived in India in February 1908 and served the Church for 37 years with a gap of four foreign trips between 1919 and 1928 meant for the settlement of the Assyrian question. May his memory be a source of encouragement to all of us.

April 1971

5

AT YOUR SERVICE

'Voice of the East' is at your service always. It is our ardent desire to be of maximum help to all our readers. Although we have not succeeded always, we have survived. For that we thank God. We thank you too.

Since our readers are from various walks of life, we find it extremely difficult to cater to the needs of all our readers. We know your interests are diverse. We include scholarly articles on the faith and history of this ancient Church. We also give news of the activities of our Church in India and abroad suitably illustrated with photographs of bishops and others.

Though our pages are limited due to financial reasons, we publish both English and ancient Syriac articles. But our readers in Iraq, Syria and also the Assyrians in America prefer articles in spoken (Swadaya) Syriac. We are happy to consider this request and we may seriously think of increasing the number of pages.

We want to have atleast 100 paying subscribers so that this magazine will have no financial problem. We need your help in order to improve the quality of printing and increase the number of subscribers.

We welcome your comments and criticism so that we may serve you better.

May 1971

6

COONEN CROSS

As a part of the celebration of St. Thomas Day this year, the Youths' Association decided to go on a pilgrimage to Cochin particularly the sight of the Coonen Cross. In the last three years we visited the places connected with the tradition of the preaching of St. Thomas - Crangannore, the Church at Palayur and mountain of Malayattur in 1968, 69 and 70 respectively.

This year's choice is significant. At this place a historic event took place in the 16th century. It is not connected with St. Thomas but with the St. Thomas Christians. It is not of the remote past of the first century, but of the modern period, for that event took place 155 years after the arrival of the Portuguese in India that was an event which changed the course of the history of the Christian Church in India.

The revolt of Coonen Cross (means bent cross) in Cochin 1653 A.D. was the result of the feeling of resentment that was building up in the minds of the Syrian Christians ever since the arrival of the Portuguese and particularly since the unfortunate Synod of Diamper in 1599 A.D.

The immediate cause was the arrival of a Syrian Metropolitan Mar Aithalaha (or Ahatalla) and his 'drowning' in Cochin. The provoked Syrian Christians decided not to submit to the Portuguese. That was the oath taken at the Coonen Cross. Now some Catholics say that Mar Ahatalla was not drowned in Cochin, but was only taken to custody to die in a prison in Lisbon, Portugal.

July 1971

7

N.C.C. ASSEMBLY

The National Christian Council of India is having its Assembly in Kerala from August 31 to September 5, 1971. Since it is the first time the Churches in Kerala are getting an opportunity to host the national Assembly of the N.C.C. of India, elaborate preparations have been made to make it a grand success.

The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East in India, as an ancient Church is involved in the great ecumenical movement. The Universal Church of the East has been a member of the World Council of Churches since its inception in 1948 at Amsterdam and the late Mar Thoma Darmo was one of the delegates to the World Council of Churches Assembly when it met in New Delhi in 1961.

It was in 1969 the Chaldean Syrian Church in India became a member of the Kerala Christian Council, a regional unit of the National Christian Council of India. In 1970 it was decided to admit this Church as a full member of the National Christian Council.

At its present Assembly in Kottayam, His Grace Mar Aprem will represent this Church. We are happy to extend a warm welcome to all delegates to this Assembly.

August 1971

8

BANGLADESH

Much suffering is going on in and around Bangladesh. It is one of India's closest neighbours. So refugees, thousands of them, started swarming into Indian territory. That was the only possible thing the people of East Pakistan could do when the oppression and massacre of the freedom fighters was let loose there.

It is now India's responsibility to help these ill-fated people. As Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi stated they are guests and not refugees. But can India support these eight million guests? No, it is not possible for India single-handedly to bear this huge burden.

World opinion should be mobilised so that massive relief operations are launched to help these refugees. Some countries are doing it. But that is no answer to the problem. Christian social agencies are doing their best to help the victims of war. They are assisted by a team of volunteers such as Doctors, Nurses, Teachers and Engineers. It is a gigantic task to meet the primary needs of the refugees displaced from their homes. India being a good neighbour is committed to undertake the responsibility to help these 'guests' from trouble-torn Bangladesh. Let us pray for a peaceful settlement of the Bangladesh problem.

October 1971

9

WAR

Nobody likes that word. War means senseless slaughter and devilish destruction; it causes indescribable suffering to thousands of innocent people. Both soldiers and civilians lose their lives. Nations condemn war. Still war is always there with humanity. Now it has begun in the border between India and Pakistan.

The Indian government did their best to avert it, even when the refugees were flowing from Pakistan's eastern province known as Bangladesh into Indian territory. To avoid war the Indian government took upon there the responsibility of feeding nearly ten millions refugees daily. That was too an expensive exercise for a poor nation like India which finds it extremely hard to feed its own hungry millions.

The 1971 Indo-Pak war is more bloody than the 1965 war. We do not know how many thousands will perish in this war. When will it end? Nobody knows. What we Christians can do is to pray for peace and also to pray for the wounded soldiers and civilians of both countries. December 12 has been declared as a prayer day by Bishops' Conference of Kerala.

Wars must stop. Whether in India or in Vietnam wars should not be fought. The conqueror do not reduce the calamities of the war. The people who know the atrocities of the two World Wars and of other minor Wars should never allow another War to destroy us.

December 1971

10
ASCENSION

Forty days after the Resurrection, (Easter day) the Lord ascended into heaven. During his forty days on the earth the risen Lord appeared to his disciples on various occasions and on the 40th day, a Thursday, he ascended into heaven. We remember this 40th day as the Festival of Ascension.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven he declared "I am sending upon you my Father's promised gift, so stay here in this city until you are armed with the power from above." (Luke 24:29) Such a promise was necessary even for the disciples who lived with the Master for three and a half years.

Although they were direct witnesses of the resurrected Lord, it was not enough. They were about to receive the final blessing from uplifted hands of the ascending Christ. That too was not sufficient. They were asked to wait until they received the power from above.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and spent all their time in the temple praising God. They are waiting for the power from above. The departure of our Lord from this world did not discourage or depress the disciples. Let the day of Ascension remind us of the need for the power from above.

June 1979

11

GOLDEN JUBILEE

We are glad to note that Mar Narsai Press is celebrating its Golden Jubilee this year. The press has been printing the Voice of the East magazine for the last 22 years. We take it to be our duty to wish Mar Narsai Press all the best.

It was in 1926 that Mar Narsai Press was established in Trichur by Mar Abimalek Timotheus (d.1945) Metropolitan of Malabar and India. Since then it has been making worthy progress. It has a good reputation now among the printing presses in Trichur for professional acumen in the art of printing.

As a publisher of Syriac books, Mar Narsai Press has made a significant contribution not only in India but also abroad. The Assyrians in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Australia, England and America regularly write to Mar Narsai Press for their annual calendars in Syriac language The three volumes of the Khudra, one of its prized publications undertaken by Mar Thoma Darmo (d. 1969) as well as other liturgical books are in great demand.

Translations from the Aramaic language to the modern Assyrian were published in the Mar Narsai Press. Marganeetha written by Mar Audisho of Suva and Armenia (died in 1318 A.D.) was printed in both old language and in modern language side by side in every page.

We are happy to know that Mar Narsai Press is publishing several books to mark the occasion of its Golden Jubilee.

May 1976

12

HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

The Youths' Association has launched a programme for the construction of at least one house a year for a homeless family. The members of the Church are requested to eat a simple lunch and to save the money on Sunday after the St. Thomas Day in July and to donate it to the Youths' Association building fund. It is hoped that Rs.3,000/- would meet the cost of building a small cheap house of two rooms.

Constructing free houses for the homeless is not a novel idea. Not only Christians but also Hindus such as Mahatma Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave had launched such campaigns to give land to the landless millions of India. Several Churches in Kerala have already contributed hundreds of houses. The government of Kerala launched an ambitious scheme for building one hundred thousand houses for the homeless.

Christ who told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar asks all Christians to care for the poor. It is our duty to help others who cannot afford minimum comforts of life with regard to shelter, food and clothing.

Owing to financial constraints we could not fulfil our obligations to the homeless. Still our conscience has to be disturbed for the sake of the poor. We should start in a small way at least. We hope that more people will come forward with donations to make this programme a great and grand success.

June 1976

13

NESTORIAN MISSIONS

We are glad that Nestorian Missions has come out of Mar Narsai Press as the second of its golden jubilee. The book is immensely informative. As the number of pages is limited we could not publish more pages from that book in the Voice of the East. We hope that our readers will buy copies and read about the enterprising missions our forefathers had undertaken.

In our last issue we published a few pages as we have done in the current issue. But the thrill comes when one reads the book at one stretch in a day or two. The book had been considerably condensed for this purpose. We wish you a happy reading.

It is amazing that our forefathers went to many countries. We should be proud of these missionaries both lay and clergy who went to China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Tibet, etc. with much hardships. We are grateful that the doubting Thomas reached India and made many converts of which the Indian Church is the living example.

It is our hope that more books on the history, faith and worship of our ancient Church will be made available in the English language. Many pearls of wisdom remain buried in the literary treasures of our great Church in the Syriac (Aramaic) language. Most of the present generation do not know it. Therefore it is essential that we should have more books like *Nestorian Fathers* and *Nestorian Missions*.

July 1976

14

THE NAME OF OUR CHURCH

We are receiving letters from people requesting clarification on the name of our Church. It is indeed a very important matter to have a correct name. The official title of course, is the Church of the East, but refer also to many Churches of the Orthodox eastern tradition.

Therefore some other suitable name has become necessary to refer to our Church. Western scholars began to call us Nestorian Church because we recognize Nestorius as one of the saints of the Church. Another name 'East Syrian Church' is used to differentiate us from the West Syrian Church nicknamed Jacobites. The Church is also known by three names - The Persian Church, Babylonian Church, The Seleucian Church and the Chaldean Syrian Church.

The Assyrian Church is the name used since the last century to refer to this Church. One difficulty with this is that the word Assyrian is an ethnic word referring to the descendants of King Nebuchednezzer and his subjects. The Assyrians today are proud of King Nebuchednezzer and of the ancient Assyrian kingdom.

Many other races like Arabs, Zoroastrians, Chinese, Hindus, Tibetans and many others joined this great Church. This is the reason why the word Assyrian is not complete enough to refer to this Universal Church of the East.

August 1976

15

THE CHURCH HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

The third triennial conference of the Church History Association of India met at the Methodist Centre in Bombay from October 19 to 23. It brought together more than fifty church historians in India. The august gathering included Indian and foreign scholars who are engaged in teaching or doing research in the history of Christianity in India.

The presence of some bishops in the company of professional Church Historians revealed the interest these Church Administrators have in the field of Church History. After all, Eusebius, the first well known Church historian of the 4th century, was the Bishop of Caesarea. Besides some Bishops in India the Bishop of Pakistan (Dr. William Young) also attended the conference and participated in the deliberations effectively.

We are glad that Mar Aprem Metropolitan was elected the President of the Church History Association for the next three years. In the acceptance speech, he stated that before the next conference scheduled to be held in October 1979 in Calcutta the Association would bring out at least the first two of the six volumes of the history of Christianity in India. He also announced that he would work for the formation of an Asian Church History Association. He wished both these projects success.

March 1976

16

CELEBRATION OF ST. THOMAS DAY

Every year the Youths' Association celebrates the St. Thomas Day on July 16th or the nearest Sunday. In some years it was a picnic or a pilgrimage to the churches of historical interest connected with the tradition of St. Thomas who is believed to have founded Christianity in India in 52 A.D.

In recent years, the Youths Association arranged conferences and talks by prominent men in connection with the St. Thomas day. This brought together young and old people who discussed affairs of common interest to the Church.

Last year the members of the Church abstained from one major meal on the St. Thomas Day and donated the money so saved for the construction of a house for a poor man who had no house to live in. More than three thousand rupees was collected likewise and a piece of land was purchased near the Seminary, six miles north of Trichur. A small but nice house was constructed and was presented to a poor family. Since there is room for two more houses in the same plot, an effort is being made to collect six thousand rupees to build two more houses. Many people are giving up a major meal every Wednesday for this purpose. The Youths Association has not reached the target. But it is a noble target indeed.

July 1977

17

MAR TIMOTHEUS CENTENARY

The 28th August 1977 is the hundredth birthday of the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan of Kellaitha family in Mar Bishu, Urumiah, who came to India in February 1908 as the Metropolitan of Malabar and India. He died in India on 30 April 1945 and he was laid to rest in a chapel near the Big Church, Trichur.

The whole year beginning with August 28 has been declared as the Birth Centenary year of the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus. The Church in India was the field of his manifold activities for 37 out of his 67 years of life is planning to celebrate the birth centenary in fitting manner.

It is true that the Indian Church is very much attached to the revered memory of their late spiritual shepherd. But Mar Abimalek Timotheus belongs to the universal Assyrian Church. He laboured for them in the Middle East, Europe, England and America. Those who recall the Assyrian tragedy following the First World War can never forget the meritorious service rendered by Mar Timotheus. We hope that the Assyrians abroad will remember this year as the birth centenary year of the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan.

August 1977

18

FESTIVAL OF THE CROSS

On September 26th we celebrate the festival of the Cross (Eda d Sliva). The western date according to the Gregorian Calendar is September 13, thirteen days earlier. While we celebrate this festival we remember historic event of the finding of the Cross of the Crucifixion nearly three centuries after that event in Calvary.

Helen, the mother of King Constantine who accepted Christianity, went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to discover the lost Cross of the Crucifixion. She held a long consultation with the elderly people of the locality to fix the place. Finally three crosses were dug up in the vicinity of the site of the Crucifixion. The problem was to identify the exact one of the Crucifixion. As the tradition says when a dead body was placed on the Cross of Christ it became alive. The place where the miracle happened is designated as the chapel of Queen Helena in the Church of Resurrection.

Since the fourth century this festival began to be observed in many Churches. We remember the dedication and sincerity of Queen Helena on this occasion. We hope that participation in this festival would inspire us to follow her example to honour the Cross of Calvary which washed our sins away.

September 1977

19

OUR GRADUATES

It is commendable that the Clergy Council has given a reception to the young people of our Church who graduated during the last academic year. It is for the second time that such a meeting is arranged to felicitate our graduates. About half a century ago when Rev. Francis Peringay and Deacon C.J. Chacko graduated, it was a rare event. But now the numbers have increased. A few dozens of our young people obtain degrees every year. There are arts and science graduates as well as engineers and doctors.

While the Voice of the East congratulates all the graduates of 1977 we urge them to continue their interest in the Church. We need the services and co-operation of our young people. We hope that they will regularly read the Voice of the East and that some of them will write articles. Now that they are free from the burdens of examinations, they will have more time to work for the Church. Educated people have a great responsibility to society. Their education must help them to think of ideas for the building up of their ancient Church.

Quite often we have found non-graduates and less educated people like the members of the Youths' Association and the Mahilasamajam in the forefront of Church activities. We pray that our graduates and post graduates may come forward and do their best for the progress of our Church.

November 1977

20

MARRIAGE AGE

After careful consideration for a long time the Union Cabinet has decided to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 16 from 15 and for boys to 21 from 18. The general proposal was to make it 18 and 21. Many had strongly argued for 21 and 25.

This decision of the Union Cabinet is likely to be approved by the Indian Parliament in November itself. This raising of the minimum age of marriage is long overdue. The health and size of the family in an over-populated country of 620 million people is a matter that receives urgent and serious consideration.

The new marriage age of 16 and 21 will not pose a problem to the marriages taking place in our Church. As a matter of fact in most of the marriages that have taken place in our Churches in recent years the couples are above 16 and 21. The majority of the couples in the marriages in our community are above 18 and 25. A considerable number are above 21 and 30.

Gone are the days of child marriages in India. Now boys wait until they secure a means of livelihood on their own and begin earning before taking responsibility to raise a family. We welcome the increase in the minimum age of marriage.

November 1977

N.B. Later the girl's minimum age for marriage was raised from 16 to 18

21

BYE BYE 1977

An eventful year is bidding good-bye to us. In India it made history. It saved democracy from dictatorship. It opened the eyes of many political leaders and persuaded them to forget their petty differences and unite in order to fight a common foe for a noble cause.

Most of the Indians are happy at the turn of events. Let us hope that now they will work for the benefit of the poor - they will now do their best to check the rise in prices, to eradicate corruption and to do everything possible to strengthen democracy in this country.

In West Asia talks of peace are in progress. It is one of the most difficult problems for the Jews and Moslems. At last Israel and Egypt have vowed to work for peace. Let us hope and pray that some satisfactory solution will be found to the question of establishing lasting peace in West Asia.

As for our Church affairs we anticipated some peace formula in 1977. It did not happen, however. Now we should continue to pray and work for the desired unity of our ancient Church.

Let the new year bring the two separated groups of our Holy Church closer and closer so that some solution will be found to the unfortunate schism that has caused much sorrow to many of us. Let us pray 1978 will be an year of peace to the world as well as to the Church.

December 1977

22

CYCLONE IN SOUTH INDIA

Cyclone swept some areas in South India in November 1977. The states that are worst hit are Andhra and Tamil Nadu. The situation in Andhra State is the worst in this century in India. It is considered as the national disaster of great enormity.

Although the official figures of the people killed in the cyclone are around ten thousand many visitors to the spot believe it is at least fifty thousand. As it was harvest time hundreds of labourers were in the fields. Whole villages were washed away by the killer cyclone. The crop was gone. The land cannot be reclaimed so easily.

How to rehabilitate the survivors? How to bury or burn the dead bodies? How to reclaim the land and convert it into the cultivable fields? Who will rebuild the Churches? More difficult is to build the morale of people who lost everything. One village headman who lost all his villagers committed suicide.

The government officials were not fully competent to handle the situation effectively. Moreover state government was not willing to seek the help of the Central Government which is ruled by their political opponents. The voluntary agencies however, came to the rescue. The World Council of Churches, World Vision, Billy Graham, Evangelistic Association and CARITAS went into action in the affected areas. Mother Teresa and her sisters of charity did wonders in these areas.

January 1978

23

THE POWER OF THE PRESS

Beth-Nahrain, an English-Assyrian publication from California in their February-March issue carries a guest Editorial by Dr. Wilson Y. Bet Mansour of Tehran, Iran under the above caption. He writes that the chief function of the Press is that of information. It also has a secondary function, that of binding people together in a common cause. The fate of a people and/or its strength can only be determined by the published information it has.

In his thought provoking editorial which first appeared in Atour Newspaper in Iran he has made four useful suggestions.

1. Synchronization of editorials and policies of the periodicals e.g. concentration on certain vital and relevant topics.
2. Sharing information and news.
3. Establishment of regional Assyrian Information Centres - one purpose of this centre could be the collection of all recent Assyrian publications and distributing them to the local people.
4. If a periodical is facing financial and/or distribution problems, assistance can be attained easily, until the problem passes.

The Voice of the East, perhaps being the oldest of the several publications connected with the Assyrian Church and people welcome the idea of closer ties among fellow periodicals 'The Voice of the East' known as Kala min madnha in the Assyrian language used to carry several articles and news items in modern Assyrian language until 1968.

April 1978

24

VACATION

Now it is summer vacation for Schools and Colleges in India. An academic year is over. It is a time of relaxation to many students who worked hard in reading their lessons at the eleventh hour. After a period of strenuous study the students deserve a period of rest and relaxation.

Very soon results of the final examinations will be out. Many students will feel sorry that they failed in the examinations because of their carelessness. Some others would regret that they did not get good grades good enough to qualify them for admission to Colleges. Those who pass the High School with third class (C grade) cannot secure admission on the merit basis.

Since our Church does not run a college it is very difficult for the average student to find admission to college. In Kerala, parallel colleges - Colleges with no affiliation in the University - hundreds of them - have sprung up. They coach the below average students for University exams. Some find their way up through these parallel colleges and tutorial colleges.

Students must take study seriously. Unfortunately student's strike for petty cause has become a fashion of the day. Political parties should try to create a peaceful atmosphere in educational institutions so that the students will have more interest in their studies. The students themselves should feel that their future career would be adversely affected if they do not take their studies seriously. The spare time in vacation should be usefully spent so that they can prepare for the studies ahead.

May 1978

25

RELIGIOUS MAGAZINES

Through newspapers and books people learn a lot. Even after school and college education we read books, magazines, newspapers and increase our knowledge. In India the reading habit is not as widespread as it is in the western countries. Still many people do read a lot of magazines and newspapers, if not thick books.

What about Bible Reading? A good number of Christians do go to sunday schools. But even after their sunday school education their appetite for the knowledge of the Bible is slow and low. They do not show any real interest in reading the Bible or books on the Bible or religious magazines. This is very unfortunate.

Christian magazines have very poor circulation, because people do not have interest in reading religious literature. Now some religious periodicals have introduced a column for jokes, cartoons etc. to attract Christian children. Some have a page for lessons in cooking etc. to capture the attention of the house wives. But the main purpose of Christian journalism must be to reach the readers basic truths from the Bible.

It is high time that Christians should realise the need for reading the Holy Bible and religious magazines which will strengthen their spiritual life. When we read the Bible over and over again, we get new insights. That will strengthen us in times of despair.

June 1978

26

HUNGER

Many of my readers do not know what hunger is. But millions of people all over the world are hungry right now. Even in an affluent nation like America many go to bed hungry. In poorer countries like India the situation is worse.

Reading the editorial on this topic in the latest issue (June 1978) of Decision magazine I was appalled at the seriousness of the problem. The editorial reveals "During most of the years since 1955 we have imported more food from hungry lands than we have exported to them. The same is true of other developed nations. Yet many of us still assume that the richer nations feed the poorer nations."

The above mentioned editorial admits that we cannot stop what others do as we are not part of these trade agreements. One thing we can do, suggests the American editor, that we don't have to consume so much. It is true of us in India too. Many of us eat more than what we really need, when millions go hungry around us. Even when doctors advise us not to take much sugar which will cause diabetes or much salt which may bring in blood pressure, many of us do not care to listen to that advice. We take extra sugar and take an injection of insulin!

Let us open our eyes to the seriousness of the problem of hunger in various parts of the world. Let us consume less so that others may have a little more than what they have now.

July 1978

27

YOUTH CONFERENCE

The conference which met at the Seminary of our Church on July 15 and 16 showed some signs of interest among the youth compared to previous years. There was greater participation from various branches of the Youths' Association.

The Youths gave leadership for the worship services for both days. The 'talent night' on the first day brought to light the musical talent of the young people. How useful it would be if these young people got proper encouragement which they deserve richly. The Youths' Association should offer leadership by organizing orchestra as well as choir to discover and develop the musical talents of our young people.

One of the resolutions passed on this occasion emphasized the need of limiting attendance of this conference to those who are really young i.e. those under the age of 40. At present even those above seventy have been attending these conferences. Some youth do not feel at home in the presence of their fathers or uncles! Hence a resolution was unanimously passed limiting the age of the members of the Youths' Association to 16 to 40.

Another recommendation was to end the sex discrimination. Let the women of that age group also be allowed to be full members of the Youths Association. It is a progressive step indeed, although long overdue.

August 1978

28

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The birth centenary of the Late Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan was celebrated in a grand manner during the past year in various parishes in India. It was appropriate that the Church in India paid homage to the Metropolitan who served it for 37 years. His tomb in Trichur is being visited by thousands of people every month.

The celebrations in various parishes in Trichur. Ernakulam, Bangalore, Madras, Bombay etc. helped the present generation to know of the sacrifices made by this great man. It helped the old people to refresh their memories of the good old days.

As for the mode of celebrations, different parishes did it differently. In some places there was a fellowship meal together. In some it was an occasion to distribute rice to the poor in the neighbourhood. There were meetings and rallies in some other parishes.

Tri-colour photos of Mar Abimalek Timotheus printed on post cards were distributed widely. A Souvenir giving details of Mar Timotheus is being published shortly.

More lasting memories of this one-year celebration will be the "Mar Timotheus Birth Centenary Auditorium" that was constructed at the Mar Aprem Church, Trichur - 5. The construction of the Mar Timotheus Church at Calicut is expected to be completed within a few months. A Technical Training Centre planned as a fitting memorial of this centenary will be started soon.

September 1978

29

PARISH AND EVANGELISM

Evangelism has been very often misunderstood as mere verbal proclamation of the Gospel. When we read about the ministry of Jesus Christ we can easily see that it deals with wholeness of man. The pastoral ministry should deal with the whole man in dimensions of his life - Political, Social, Economic, Cultural and Spiritual.

In India it is essential to emphasize these dimensions in evangelism, especially owing to the poverty and various forms of enslavement that prevail in our nation.

Thirty-one years after independence of India from British rule, a minority of 10% exploits the services of 70%. There is no economic stability for 75% of Indian citizens. Nearly half the population are denied basic needs. The oppressed in the urban areas live in slums and escape from their misery in drink, films, sex, gambling, smuggling, lottery etc. Superstitions sway their minds.

The parish priest should be well equipped to give his people a sense of direction and help them and liberate themselves from all forces that corrupt them - It is not like a political party which promises a lot if it is elected to power. Often one faces the same misery even when the opponents come to power. A pastor should help his flock.

A sense of social responsibility should go along with his spiritual concern. Then only both dimensions of evangelism would be fulfilled.

October 1978

30

SILVER JUBILEE YEAR

With the publication of the last issue The Voice of the East commenced its 25th year of publication. It was in October 1954 the first issue came out. The first editor was Mr. M.P. Inasu and the first printer and publisher was Mr. Jose Davis Mooken B.Sc. They were General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary of the Youths' Association at that time.

The Voice of the East came to fill the gap created by the cessation of the publication Light from the East which was being published from Chicago at that time. The Voice of the East during the last 24 years served the Church in India through its Malayalam edition and the Universal Church through the English and Syriac editions. In addition to articles on faith, history and worship of our Church this periodical kept the members and friends of our Church informed of the activities of our Church in India and abroad.

Owing to the unfortunate split in our Church there has been a definite decline in the circulation of this magazine since 1964, especially in the English edition. Still the Voice of the East has survived the crisis.

As Voice of the East has entered its 25th year we express our hope to be of greater service to our readers. We do not plan to have any colourful celebration to mark our silver jubilee. Nevertheless, we hope that during this 25th year we will be able to publish more scholarly and useful articles to make our silver jubilee worth remembering.

November 1978

31

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

As December approaches every year, everybody is aware of the Christmas season. The rich people spend money lavishly on gifts to friends and relatives. In Western countries Christmas shopping often causes traffic jam. In India Christians are only 2.7% of the total population. Further the majority of the Christians are poor and cannot afford the luxury of Christmas presents. Some send greeting cards.

Another item of the Christmas festivities is a sumptuous dinner. Even ordinary people spend some extra money on food on that day. Some indulge in drinking which they consider as an inseparable part of any celebration. In Western society, not only drinking but dancing is also part of the X-mas celebrations. Even those who do not believe in Christ enjoy Christmas celebrations.

It appears to be an irony that often many people forget to remember the significance of Christmas. We should not forget the picture of a baby in a manger. What a simple and humble birth! What a contrast with the festivities of today! Unless we Christians, give importance to the birth of the child in the manger, and recapture the spirit of the Christmas event that took place in Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago, we are grieving the Holy Spirit, Rejoice in the birthday of our Saviour. But do it in a way pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

December 1978

32

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

On December 21, 1976 the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution declaring 1979 as the International Year of the Child.

On November 20th, 1959 the General Assembly with representatives of 78 countries, adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which have been drafted and redrafted twice since 1950.

In ten carefully worded principles, the Declaration affirms that all children are entitled

to affection, love, and understanding
to adequate nutrition and medical care
to free education
to all opportunity for play and recreation
to a name and nationality
to special care, if handicapped
to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster
to learn to be useful members of society and to develop individual abilties
to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood
to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin.

Let Churches and organizations join hands to observe it in a fitting manner.

February 1979

33

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

The 15th of August 1979 will mark the 32nd anniversary of Indian Independence. On Jan. 26, 1980 we will be completing 30 years as a Republic. The recent change of the Prime Minister in India has made India an important item in world news. The resignation of the 83 year old Prime-Minister Morarji Desai created headlines in the newspapers in India and abroad.

Compared to the changes that are taking place in Africa or in Iran, very close to India, the change in New Delhi did not cause any stir. On the other hand although serious disturbances did not take place in India governmental stability at the Centre is gone. It is not anything to be expected to materialise in the near future. Political parties are broken to pieces. Politicians have shown their changeable mind more often than before.

What good has national independence brought to India? How far have we progressed? How have we used our freedom? Have we done enough to help the poor and the suffering millions of our nation? Even thirty-two years after independence, these questions are relevant. Although independent India has produced a few millionaires and multi- millionaires, the economic position of the majority of Indians is poor. The poor millions of India are voting these power-hungry politicians to power. But no good has taken place to save them from poverty, employment etc. Let us hope that this Independence Day will bring us glad tidings for a better tomorrow.

August 1979

34

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

At the 19th Assembly of the National Christian Council of India held at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, on Oct. 4-8, 1979 an important constitutional amendment was passed to change its name to National Council of Churches in India. Therefore, although it will continue to be called the N.C.C. as before, the emphasis is now on the Churches and not the mission boards or societies. It is hoped that as the National Council of Churches in India the N.C.C. will focus its attention as a common witness on various matters.

About 200 leaders of 23 denominations with a total membership of about 8 million members met in Delhi. It is hoped that the fellowship and unity demonstrated at the Delhi Assembly will strengthen the secretariat of the N.C.C. at Nagpur and to enable it to carry out its mandate with greater confidence and determination.

On the floor of the Assembly the Church leaders expressed their confidence in the CASA (Church's Auxiliary for Social Action) which was created as an autonomous body by the Assembly of the N.C.C. at Nagpur four years ago. They noted the emphasis that was laid on development and also on the work of relief always admirably carried on by CASA.

Another important policy decision taken at this Assembly was to include the small Churches too in the Executive of the N.C.C.

October 1979

35

NOBEL PRIZE FOR MOTHER TERESA

When the Nobel Prize for Peace was announced recently, all were happy to note that it went to a very deserving person, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was born a European as she was born in Albania. But she has been an Indian citizen since 1949. Hence Indians are happy and proud. She is the first Indian Christian to receive the Nobel Prize. Only two Indians have received the Nobel Prize so far. They are the poet Ravindra Nath Tagore from Calcutta and the Physicist Dr. C.V. Raman from South India.

Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun aged 69, works among the poor and the sick people in the slums of Calcutta. She wears a sari instead of the regular dress of a Catholic nun. Service is the motto of the special order of Mother Teresa. As far as she is concerned service is worship. It does not mean that she does not pray. She prays for one hour early morning and late in the evening. She is hard working. She eats simple food. She is not an orator or a scholar. She is a doer with courage, conviction and determination.

The 200 thousand dollars (more than one and a half million rupees) which is the gift money of this Nobel Prize will go to the poor and the sick in India. Her life should be an example to all men and women. Her humility is a challenge to all of us.

November 1979

36

WELCOME, NEW DECADE

A decade has passed with the dawn of 1980. Let us look forward with awe to a very useful and blessed decade.

Politically and spiritually several changes and challenges are likely to come around. Loud voices will decry the evils around the world. Tall claims will be made. Several charges will be brought and refuted. Ordinary people will be even more confused than ever. They do not know what is going on in high places.

What any Christian can hope for is to have a decade under the guidance of Almighty God. He is the invisible Creator and also the Sustainer of this universe. What we can do is to pray to Him and obey His commands. Quite often we create a hell of our own by our mistakes.

There are a lot of challenges around us. When we attempt to do something persons with vested interests often prevent us from carrying out our plans. Our talents are sometimes wasted and sometimes unused.

We should humbly learn lessons from the failures of the past decade. We should be more active than we were in the past.

For a committed Christian it can be a rewarding decade under God. Let us pray God in this infinite wisdom may help us to lead a life acceptable to Him and that the decade beginning with 1980 may bring us all Gods' abundant gifts.

Jan-Feb 1990

37

CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONAL SONGS

A book of Christian devotional songs composed by Mar Aprem Metropolitan is being printed at Mar Narsai Press. Most of the songs were originally composed in the Malayalam language. Some are translations of Aramaic songs such as Maran Isho, Khayyil Maran, Raze Danzavn etc. from the Qurbana Liturgy. They are translated without changing the number of syllables (8 syllables in each line) so that they can be sung in the original Aramaic tune. Plans are in progress to produce a cassette (60 minutes for 15 selected devotional songs). If sufficient interest is seen efforts will be made to give sufficient musical accompaniment for this recording.

Religious music played a significant role in the Church of the East. Mar Aprem of the 4th century composed many songs. 'Maran Isho' sung at the time of receiving Holy Qurbana is one of his many devotional songs. His famous songs were in seven syllables.

Mar Narsai towards the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the sixth wrote several songs. He is known as the Harp of the Holy Spirit. Most of his metrical homilies are twelve-syllabic couplets. A few are four-line strophes in hepta syllabic metre.

In addition to Mar Aprem and after him Mar Narsai, there are others like Mar Bawai and much later Mar Abdisho (d.1318) did much to enrich Aramaic poetry. Music can create a worshipful atmosphere.

April 1980

38

SIMPLE LIFE STYLE

We live in a country of plenty for the minority and poverty for the majority. Most people, whether rich or poor, want to earn more. Most of them want to drink life to the last. Once an American billionaire was asked how much wealth would satisfy a man. He said, "a little more". Christians or non-Christians, rich or poor, want a little more.

A simple life style is always desirable for us. Because there are many who cannot afford a meal a day. Why do we eat more? To make us sick? That is a food for thought.

In the Old Testament, we read of the celebration of the Year of the Jubilee. It was meant to readjust the excess land that had gone to the strong and powerful, it was to control exploitation of the poor by the rich. Since we are strangers and sojourners we have to share the material resources of this world. The system of the tithe instituted during the Old Testament times was intended to accumulate the extra wealth to be used for the poor and the needy.

The New Testament also does not encourage the hoarding of wealth. To the rich ruler Jesus makes the sale of his goods as an inevitable condition for following Him. Zachaeus also returns more than what he illegally acquired as a result of his following Jesus. It is true that Jesus did not glorify poverty. But if we indulge in extravagance we have no justification. A simple life style is ideal for Christians, for all men and women.

May 1980

39

MORAL DEGRADATION

The newspapers almost daily carry reports of rape or murder. There are many such happenings which go unreported in the newspapers. The poor are the victims often. Sometimes the culprits are punished. But on many occasions they escape through their influence or due to lack of positive evidence.

Recently many women's organizations in India protested against the rape of women. Often women do not report such instances for fear of social stigma. The women demanded that the law courts take stricter action against men who commit such offences. Their demonstrations helped the public to open their eyes to the sad state of affairs of the women who became victims of such sad sexual exploitation.

Murder also takes place very often in connection with rape, or theft. When rape and murder are on the increase it shows the moral degradation of society. Often it happens after taking liquor. So all these things are interlinked. Money and power also corrupt people. Some take courage to commit atrocities when they feel that they can get away with it.

Beware of these social evils and exploitations. Let us join hands with others in saving our world from this evil moral degradation.

This degeneration transforms some men into beasts. They grow more beastly under the influence of alcoholic drinks.

June 1980

40

ANTI DRINK MOVEMENT

Kerala, the southern most state in India, where there are a large number of Christians as well as coconut trees is an area where toddy (tapped from coconut trees) and other kinds of liquors are consumed in large quantities. Christian leaders are alarmed at the spread of the evil of drinking among Christians. The Anti-Drink movement was launched by the Kerala Bishops to check this evil.

The 16th annual gathering of this movement which met at Kottayam decided to call upon all Christian leaders in Kerala to wage a concerted crusade against consumption of liquor. Many of the vices found among Christians are caused by the drink. Many poor people spend their income on liquor and therefore their families continue to live in poverty. Similarly many rich Christians make it a status symbol to serve expensive foreign liquors at dinners in connection with baptisms and marriages.

This is an endeavour in which Christians can join hands with other religions and social organisations. Since alcoholism is a disease there should be de-addiction centres to treat the patients.

Many young people start drinking at College farewells, get-togethers etc. It is imperative that an all out effort should be made to check this social evil in all possible ways. Otherwise Christians will be a laughing stock before others. Organizations such as Alcoholic Anonymous can do much in this field to help alcoholics to give up their habit and start a drink-free life.

September 1980

41

LEPROSY WORK

Leprosy is a curable disease. It can be cured if proper treatment is given in the early stages. If it is not controlled in time it will do much harm not only to the patients but also to the society in which they live. In India leprosy prevalence rate is different in various states. In Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu it is high, in some districts as high as 40 per thousand. In Kerala it is only 4 per thousand in most districts.

Government is doing their best to control leprosy. Christian organizations also are in the field. In Kerala State Roman Catholic Churches and the Salvation Army are doing useful work in this area. Our Church has a responsibility to do our share in this noble work. Some years ago a doctor of our Church, Mrs. Dorothy Chacko was given Padmashree award by the President of India, Mr. V.V. Giri. It was in recognition of the services she had rendered for the leprosy patients of the Bethany village near New Delhi.

The first Leprosarium in Nara, in Japan was started by Nestorian missionaries in 730 A.D. Empress Komyo who embraced Christianity attended to the leprosy patients in that place. So our Church has a tradition in the leprosy work. Let us do our best to fulfil this obligation to the unfortunate brethren in our midst. We can also save with proper precautions many of us from becoming victims of this dreadful disease. Let us wish all the best for the efforts to start anti-leprosy work in Palghat District. 40 miles from Trichur, where high rate of leprosy is detected.

November 1980

42

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

The early Christians were a group of converted and committed Christians. Today it is not true. Christians of all denominations in all countries have lost the 'first love.' Many of us are interested in ourselves. We grow poor spiritually. Some are growing materially. But how does it profit us for our Christian witness?

Seasons of prayer, fasting, and preaching are aimed at bringing about a spiritual renewal. There is plenty of preaching in our Churches. In addition to the regular worship services a lot of special evangelistic campaigns are conducted to bring this renewal and sense of commitment to Christians. Some of these efforts supported by prayer and preparation are producing good results. Still the general picture is not very encouraging. Alcoholism has grown among Christians in spite of all renewal campaigns and efforts.

The late Stanley Jones defined : conversion as 'reversion from perversion.' Most of us are perverted. We should find ways and means to escape from the rut we are in. We have to renounce a lot. We have to sacrifice. A concern for the poor ought to be developed. Renewal is required in the individual as well as in the Church. If one is in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold, old things have passed away; we have become new. (II Cor. 5:17)

February 1981

43

PERILS OF DRINKING

Hundreds of people in India are killed by poison in alcoholic drinks. Then many others commit suicide after they come under the influence of alcoholism. Quarrels and other evils can be avoided if we liberate ourselves from the clutches of the devil of drink.

Self control is important. When law was brought against alcoholic drinks the making of illicit liquor became a cottage industry. Many died drinking of illicit liquor. It destroys the health of those who consume it. Moreover it corrupts social life in the many ways. The law enforcing officers take bribes and taste the illicit liquor. Thus evil increases.

People have to abstain from liquor. They should know that it is a meaningless but dangerous fashion to drink. It is unfortunately associated with status in the society. The rich man thinks that he has to serve liquor preferably foreign, at his dinner. Special occasions such as marriage make it 'obligatory' for some people to serve alcoholic beverages.

How can you spend money on alcohol when your neighbour remains hungry? Avoid what is not essential. Be aware of the needs of the poor.

Proverb 20:1. *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."*

Habakok 2:5a. *"Moreover, wine is treacherous; the arrogant man shall not abide."*

March 1981

44

BLACK MONEY

In February 1981 the government of India introduced the special bearer bonds to facilitate disclosure of black money without the fear of punishment or any legal action. When all other methods failed, the government brought this novel plan. Some years ago another scheme for voluntary disclosure of black money was introduced which encouraged many rich people to disclose their hidden income. Billions of rupees still remain hidden in India.

On 18 March 1981 the Finance Minister informed the Parliament that 650 million rupees had already been netted and daily accretions were about 25 million rupees. When it closed at the end of April it was about 345 crores. If these three and half hidden billions had been unearthed earlier, it would have produced enough goods for our use and provided job opportunities for the unemployed youth. Let us hope that the 'Special bearer bonds' scheme will bear good fruits by "reducing the liquidity in the economy, besides controlling prices and canalising for productive purposes black money which had become a serious threat to the country."

The poverty of India is not owing to the lack of resources in India. There is enough money, much of it is black money. Attempts by the government to bring out this black money, have not been successful. If there is any consideration on the part of the rich towards the underprivileged in the society all the 686 millions would have enough to eat.

May 1981

45

POWER OF PENTECOST

The day of Pentecost observed in the month of June is the birthday of the Church. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they spoke in tongues. It was exactly 10 days after the resurrection of our Lord or 10 days after the Ascension of our Lord to heaven.

The glory of the day of Pentecost was that it was not a planned programme of the disciples. It was unexpected. They did not know how long it would last and what the results were going to be. 3000 souls were added to the Church as a result of the preaching of Peter anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Why is it that much of our preaching today does not produce any good result? Because much of our preaching is not inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is devoid of proper preparation. When we depend upon human ability, our words fail. When we anticipate that response should be of one particular method, God provides it otherwise.

We cannot dictate the Holy Spirit. We are unworthy vessels in the hands of God. The blessings our Lord showers on our activities will be perhaps different from those that we would like to expect. We should be willing to face the surprises. On Pentecost day the disciples had a great surprise. We can also have such wonderful results if we surrender ourselves wholeheartedly to God's will.

June 1981

46

GOSPEL AND THE POOR

Whether in India or Africa or in any of the developing countries of the world, one is alarmed at the dehumanizing conditions in which many people live. Even in the developed countries of America or Europe poverty is not unknown. In the cities as well as in villages poor people struggle for their existence.

In the Old Testament there are 300 terms which reveal the reality, causes and consequences of 'poverty.' The New Testament too uses many words to describe the poor. As Jesus said "The poor you always have with you" (Mark 14:7) because many men continue to exploit their brethren.

Exploitation continues at various levels. It is our duty as Christians to see that we attempt to fulfil Christ's desire that we do our best to help the poor. Jesus who was born in a manger became a refugee as a baby, grew up on a carpenter's home.

Speaking about hospitality Jesus commanded his host to invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame(Luke14:14). When the invited guests had declined invitation to the great feast, the host commanded his servant to go out and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. (Luke 14:21).

Way back in Deuteronomy, the people of Israel were assured : "There will be no poor among you..... if only you will obey the Voice of the Lord" (15:4). Shall we obey God now and listen to His divine voice?

August 1981

47

LITERATURE FOR RENEWAL

Why should any one write? For fame and money only? Why should a Christian write? What is the use of Christian literature? What is the prophetic ministry of Christian writers? Of Christian magazine?

Renewal is a great responsibility of every society. God does not expect His creation to be static. A lot of changes are taking place in our society. Whether we like it or not some changes are unfortunate and perhaps doing much harm to the moral fabric of society. No human being can keep quiet in this fast deteriorating law and order situation in most of the countries.

The noble profession of writing has also been corrupted. The standards have gone down. A Christian writer cannot rest content with just filling the pages. He should write with a passion to renew the society in which he lives. His writing can criticize the evils and suggest directions for improvement. He should not keep himself blissfully unaware of the realities of suffering, and injustice. Let us have more writers who can fearlessly use their pen for the renewal of our society.

Two great Indians, Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore had a genuine desire to evolve a compromise. While Gandhiji was convinced that he should choose to feed the stomach, Tagore wanted to work for feeding the mind. Finally they came to a compromise. "We two seem to hear the voice of Christ saying, "give them to eat", "feed my sheep", as we look at the poverty and misery of our people. Do we not also hear Christ say, "Man shall not live by bread alone?"

October 1981

48

SERVANT ROLE

What should be the role of the leaders in our society, secular or religious? It is a legitimate question to ask in the light of the ruthless authoritarian way many dictators have chosen to follow in recent times. In India many look up to Gandhi, the Mahatma for inspiration. For he was the greatest of the national leaders who played the highest role as a servant of the people.

Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others did not hold any political office. Still they received tremendous influence. Christ washed the feet of his own disciples. It may be easier to wash the feet of somebody else's Juniors than to wash the feet of his own disciples. It may be comfortable for some of us to love somebody else's neighbours but for most of us it is undesirable to love our own neighbours. Jesus showed the example of a servant role.

Some would argue that the servant role is not easy. You cannot enforce discipline in a servant role. You have to command. You have to use authority. You have to suspend or dismiss your juniors. You have to be a terror in your office. That is often the way dictators choose. In our times Hitler and recently Idi-Amin have done precisely that. But their end was tragic. Let us choose the role of a servant and suffer the consequences.

November 1981

49

LEARNING ARAMAIC

At last the much awaited book for beginners that helps them to learn the ancient Aramaic language also known as Eastern Syriac or the Old language by the Assyrians has been published. In 1979 Voice of the East started printing the first lessons. It attracted interest in many countries and several people began to learn the language with the help of the simple lessons in the book, 'Teach Yourself Aramaic'.

A vocabulary of a thousand words is given at the end of the book with transliteration and translation into English. Anybody who knows the English language and who is interested in learning this ancient language and understanding the gospels better will be benefitted. About the usefulness of this work the following observations of Dr. J.F. Coakley in his Foreword to that book are worth repeating.

"Syriac has no shortage of grammar books, but almost all of them are reference books for the specialist rather than guides for the learner. The only exceptions I know are printed with Western Syriac type which is not only of no use to Chaldean Syrian Christians but also a rather poor model for learning to write language. So H.G. Mar Aprem's work supplies a real want. It is admirable too that it does not dwell on tedious matters such as irregular verbs which tend to discourage anyone working alone, and it arrives at some real, if simple, reading the New Testament after only seven lessons. It is as attractive an invitation to this beautiful and important language as anyone is likely ever to get."

December 1981

50

REPENTANCE

In order to save our society from further moral and spiritual deterioration we should repent of our past and start a new life. During the prayers of three day fast (Ba'utha d' Ninvaye), many of the prayers are repeated citing the examples of those who repented. David repented after Prophet Nathan reminded him of his immorality committed to Ber Sheba. Publican, Peter, Saul of Tarsus, Zachaeus and the thief on the cross are cited in the prayers.

Real repentance is a need of the hour. Repetition of several prayers written in the past do not help us to see our own weaknesses and wickedness. We often see the faults and defeats of others, but we fail to see our own weaknesses. If at all we examine ourselves and see our faults we can make a sincere effort to remedy our defects. We should pray, "Lord, begin with me." When we voluntarily plan to lead a life pleasing in the sight of the Lord our country will improve.

To err is human. But we should repent when we realise that we have erred. Many of us are so proud of ourselves that we refuse to admit our defects. Such an attitude often takes us to further failures in our lives.

During the Lent season if we examine ourselves and see our defects and take a new direction, we can improve our lives and live happily.

February 1982

51

HOME FOR THE AGED

The world has now focussed its attention on the realities of life which everybody has to face when they become old. When people become old they are too tired and depressed to do anything to help themselves. Many of our old people do sincerely pray, "let now thy servant depart in peace".(Luke 2:29) They want it soon.

Our Church felt that a home for the aged should be established in Trichur. One home can be for those who can afford to pay. The other is more of a charitable nature. It is estimated that at least Rs.200($23) will be required for the maintenance of one old person per month or Rs.2400 ($276) per year. Is there any sponsor in our Church in India or abroad willing to pay Rs.2400 or $276 for one year to help a helpless old man or woman?

It is necessary to help children. At the same time it is our great responsibility to help the old people. When Rev. Francis Mannukadan passed away. his saving, more than Rs.12,000 was left by him. Since he was a celibate, his relatives offered to use this amount for constructing a room for an old priest to live in retirement. Although at present there is no such priest willing to leave his relatives, it is useful to start such a home where clergy or laity can stay.

May God help all good-hearted people to make this noble effort a success.

July 1982

52
BOOKS

A reader of the Voice of the East, after reading the recent issues which contained excerpts from a new book A Nestorian Bibliography, wrote us asking whether there is any library where all these books are available. The answer is "No".

There are several causes. One is that in the Middle East people ran away for their life at the time of persecutions. Another reason is that some books were bought by the libraries in the West.

Several books are out of print. Reprints are expensive. For some books no reprints are available. There is no central library where these books can be purchased.

Instead of finding excuses or putting blame on others we should try to remedy this defect. As facilities and modern techniques are now available for making microfilm or photocopies of books, one can build up a library where all books on the Church of the East, Aramaic or English, printed or handwritten, old or recent, could be preserved. If people are willing to spend money on buildings or luxuries of life, we should find resources for books. It will be really helpful to the members of our Church and others who want to learn about this ancient Church.

New books also should be written. When reading habits are cultivated among our faithful, some readers will become authors and in course of time, scholars.

October 1982

53

ARAMAIC COMPUTER PROJECT

The Aramaic Computer Project of the Way International, New Knoxville, Ohio, U.S.A. is nearing completion. With the help of IBM 3800 Laser printer, it is planned to print thousands of pages required for the concordance of the Aramaic Bible in a short time.

Seventeen thousand Aramaic forms with their Aramaic roots are included in this concordance. The research continues to get the best Estrangelo character for this concordance. The four volumes now planned are :

1. The text of the New Testament.

2. Version II of the Aramaic Concordance which will have each Aramaic root with all its associated forms and their occurrence in the New Testament.

3. An index which will show every Aramaic form with its associated root, its English translation and its part of speech.

4. An interlinear which will have an English text, the Aramaic text and the English translations of the Aramaic forms.

In Western countries the real significance of Aramaic studies in understanding the New Testament has not been fully understood. Late Dr. George M. Lamsa, an Assyrian, succeeded to some extent, through his lectures and books in creating an awareness in America. We feel that the Estrangelo Aramaic Computer project is a significant step towards helping the study of the New Testament.

November 1982

54

ASSYRIAN UNITY

These days we often hear about the unity of the Assyrians. The Assyrians admit that disunity is the main cause of the present sad state of affairs. Tribal differences, desire for leadership and further divisions have caused the sorrows of this ancient race.

Now the call for unity is heard from among the Assyrians who live abroad. Some people desire it because they consider it necessary for a political bargaining even in the countries they adopted such as the U.S.A. or England or Australia. Unity is essential in order to make their presence felt in a healthy manner.

It is also necessary to preserve their language and culture. Otherwise their ancient language will be forgotten by the second generation. Now Assyrian radio programmes and television programmes are available in the U.S.A. Hence people of all races are able to know about this ancient culture which existed in the ancient Near East centuries before civilization dawned in the West.

The need of the hour is the ecclesiastical unity of the Assyrian Christians. They are already split into three categories known as Chaldeans (Catholics), Nestorians and Jacobites. Further splits should be avoided. Let us pray for their unity.

January 1983

55

EASTER

Christians all over the world celebrate Easter as a joyous occasion. If the Western Churches give importance to Christmas, the Eastern Churches consider Easter as a greater festival. After the sorrowful event of the good Friday (Instead of Good Friday we call it the Friday of Suffering or eroovtha d Hasha) the triumphant event of Easter comes.

If our Lord was not risen, our faith would have been in vain. The risen Lord gave an assurance to His disciples and followers. He entrusted them with the responsibility of preaching and propagating His teachings and baptising the people of all nations. This command of our Lord was followed by His followers.

Since the Lord is risen, let us live in faith and thanksgiving. Let us pray to our Lord to conquer the powers of darkness as He conquered death and delivered us from sins. Let us pray that our observance of Easter may give us a new vigour to propagate His teaching. It is necessary for us to renew our lives. May the good Lord help us to renew our lives for His glory.

All Christians should observe Easter with prayers and other spiritual services. In our Church in addition to the 49 days of abstinence of Lent we fast on Maundy Thursday and Holy Saturday as we have Holy Qurbana only in the evening. All such preparations help us spiritually and revive us in the suffering of our Saviour on the Cross of Calvary.

Apr-May 1983

56

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches met at Vancouver, Canada from 24 July to 10 August. About 4000 members including about 900 official delegates from 301 member-churches attended. These Churches include most of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches with a total membership of about 400 millions (250 million Protestants and 150 million Orthodox) The Roman Catholic Church which is larger in size than all other Churches put together (Catholic membership is 750 million) sent official observers.

Various issues relating to the Christian Church and society were discussed. The need for Christian Unity was felt. Probably a Council may meet in 1987 to approve the ministry of various traditions which can make the ecumenical unity at the sacramental level more effective. At a communion service held on Sunday 31 July, the Holy Scriptures were read by the Roman Catholics. Members of various Churches participated in this service.

The W.C.C. which was formed in 1948 had its first Assembly in Amsterdam (1948) and the succeeding Assemblies were in Chicago (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968) and Nairobi (1975).

Let us hope that the various Christian Churches will work in co- operation for the protection and preservation of common goals and interests.

Aug-Sep 1983

57

SYRIAC TRANSLATIONS

Most of the books of the ancient Church of the East, also known as Nestorian, or Assyrian, are in Aramaic(Syriac) language. It was mainly a Syriac speaking Church and hence there was no problem about the language. Now the majority of the Assyrians in Iraq do not know literary Aramaic language which is the liturgical language. Hence translation into the modern (spoken) Assyrian or Arabic has become necessary.

As for the members of this Church scattered in the Western world particularly of the second generation Assyrians born in England or America translation into English is a 'must.' The members of the Church of the East in India are not Assyrians ethnically. But their liturgical language is Aramaic. Translation into English or Malayalam, the regional Indian language spoken in Kerala, is essential.

As far as English is concerned some of the above books such as Qurbana, Baptism etc. have been translated. Credit goes to the Rev. George P. Badger, Canon (later Bishop) A.J. Maclean, (both clergymen belonged to the Church of England), Alfonso Mingana, (a Chaldean priest who became a Quaker), E.A.T. Wallis Budge, Dom. R.H. Connolly and some others who ought to be congratulated for their services in this field. Let us hope more books will be translated and made available to the English-speaking public and the scholars of the present generation also.

October 1983

58

OUR YOUTH

Tomorrow's Church or nation are today's youth. Therefore unless we have dedicated young people today our Church and the nation tomorrow will go from bad to worse. It is absolutely necessary to train and guide young people.

The Bible teaches us, 'Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Many young people are mislead by atheists. They look at the weakness of the leaders of the Church and despise the faith. If the people, the Churchmen are weak and dishonest, it is our duty to be better persons tomorrow and shoulder the responsibility and do things in a better way. But often the opposite is true. When some young enthusiasts get an opportunity to serve the Church or Society, they prove to be worse than their predecessors. Hence it is necessary to dedicate our lives in our youth and prepare ourselves for the responsibilities and prove through life of dedication to the noble causes we espoused. If that is done things will improve.

Unfortunately some young people just criticize but do not think and act creatively. First of all, love the Lord in your youth. St. Paul commanded the young man Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12)

June 1984

59

TO THE PROMISED LAND

"God, we know you will lead us out of oppression and injustice to your promised land" was the prayer which Bishop Desmond Tutu prayed during the first Sunday service after the Nobel Peace Prize was announced on 18 Oct, 1984. Bishop Tutu, the Anglican Bishop of South Africa, who leads the struggles of the black people against bondage and the oppression by the white minority, prayed this significant prayer in his home church near Johannesburg in South Africa. He is not working for special privileges for his downtrodden people. He is only asking for equal rights with the white minority.

Bishop Tutu was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, for his struggle for justice is non-violent. Violence is not the right method to achieve goals, even if goals are highly desirable. Mahatma Gandhi of India, while leading the struggle for independence taught the world that non-violent methods are good and great. Rev. Martin Luther King who led the struggle for equal rights for his black brethren followed the footsteps of Gandhi and by doing so the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bishop Tutu follows the same footsteps. His role is different from that of another Christian worker Mother Teresa who was given the same Nobel Prize for Peace in 1979. Let us thank God for people like Bishop Tutu and God Almighty may lead us to the promised land.

November 1984

60

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR

The year 1985 has been declared by the United Nations Organisation as the International Youth Year (IYY) to focus the world's attention on the needs and aspirations of the young people of our society today. They have chosen three themes - 'Participation, Development and Peace'.

Young people have a lot of energy. It should be channelised for building our society on a healthy basis. We hear about unrest in University campuses. All extra energy of the youth should be used up for the betterment of our society through active participation of the youth.

A lot has been said about development. We do not want the old way of charity to continue for ever. It is only a temporary measure. But well planned projects of developmental nature should be executed in order to eradicate poverty and misery.

Peace is not merely absence of war. It is a peace with dignity and social justice. Sometimes disturbances are necessary to attain peace and justice. The struggle for peace is not inaction, it is a positive action.

Let the whole society unitedly search for methods to make the maximum use of the energy of our young people so that the celebration of the International Youth Year, 1985 will not be a mere show but a creative celebration and the beginning of a continuing search.

February 1985

61

HOLY LAND TOUR

We are glad to know that ten members of our Church went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome to visit the places connected with Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. Peter and other saints. It is a worthy way to spend one's money. A pilgrimage to Jerusalem may be the greatest experience of a Christian.

Moslems go to Mecca and it is considered an act fitting to a religious man. Now many people go on tours to visit foreign countries. Governments and travel agencies offer cheaper and attractive package tours. Therefore rich people spend their money on such tours. Quite often some tourists see only one side of the picture and return home with the impression that countries abroad are full of vices.

A pilgrimage to the Holy land is different. The purpose of the trip is not to enjoy the pleasures of travel. It is a trip to renew spiritually one's own soul. We are glad to hear that the pilgrims from our Church were benefited spiritually.

We hope that if one wants to spend one's money on a foreign trip let preference be given to a pilgrimage rather than a pleasure trip. It cost about $1400 for each pilgrim for air fare, hotel, food etc. for two weeks.

May-Jun 1985

62

EVANGELISM INSTITUTE

Not only clergymen but laymen too can witness their Christian faith. As a matter of fact laymen can reach more people through their witness. Laymen are more in number than the clergymen. Moreover, laymen occupy important positions in the society. They can be good examples to those under them.

The All-India Evangelism Institute held once a year invites people from all walks of life to get a week's training in evangelism. We do not have to condemn other religions in order to present our Christian faith positively. If Christian faith means a blessing to us we have to tell others what it really is. Somebody put it that evangelism is like one beggar telling another beggar where to beg. We should learn something about Hinduism and Islam, because we talk to other people who belong to these religions about our experience of a life in Christ.

Laymen and women are the people who are usually busy with their own jobs or household duties. It is not easy for them to devote three or four years for training in a regular Seminary or Bible School. The Institutes can offer condensed courses and suggest books for further study. Through such methods more Christians can be trained to become real witnesses for Jesus Christ.

July 1985

63

A CALL TO PARTICIPATE

In connection with the celebration of the International Year of the Youth, declared by the United Nations, the Sub Unit on Youth of the National Council of Churches in India has issued a statement urging young people to work against all evil forces in the society. The youth should definitely be concerned about the needs of others. They should learn about social justice as well as the Bible. They should know Christ. Then only they can achieve something.

Often we find people making tall claims and the young people shouting slogans. Unless they turn to Christ and try to follow Him, the slogans or the righteous indignation shown by the Christian youth cannot produce good results.

About 20 years ago young people in University campuses and in high schools began to shout slogans and began to show concern for the country. They claimed that when they become Chief Ministers and Prime Ministers they would eradicate bribery, poverty, exploitation, injustice, slavery and many other social evils. Now some of those have become leaders of our nation. During the past 20 years their 'Young Turk' enthusiasm died out. The country is worse than before.

If our Christian youth and their leaders turn to Christ and follow Him they can be good examples for others. May such a miracle happen to our Christian youth.

August 1985

64

INCREASE IN CRIME

Today the local Weekly magazines increase their circulation by publishing illustrated feature articles on crime. One Malayalam 'weekly' has a circulation of nearly one and a half million copies. None of the well-established weeklies in Indian languages can dream of hitting a million copy circulation. Why? Do the news and photos about murder and rape provide food for thought to our readers?

Affluence, alcoholism etc. must have caused the increase in crime as well as interest in crime among the readers of magazines. Some people claim that poverty and unemployment are the main causes of the increase in crime. But in the Western countries that is not true. Films and television glorifying crime have contributed to this increase. In India the number of radios and transistors in use increased tenfold during the last 20 years to 25 million last year.

The numbers of murders rose from 11748 in 1964 to 19314 in 1978, of kidnapping and abduction from 8050 to 13616, of dacoities from 5287 to 13195, of robberies from 8336 to 22923, of burglaries from 153862 to 183991, of thefts from 273676 to 43718, of riots from 32693 to 39648, of criminal breach of trust and cheating from 21180 and 11670 to 23255 and 17821.

These figures of growth is a shame to us. Whether Hindus or Christians, it makes no difference in criminal act. In the cases of economic offences, perhaps Christians have bigger share than what they deserve. Let us pray for a decrease in crime.

Sep-Oct 1985

65

HEALTH IS A GIFT

Lawrence Chua, a runner in the 42 Kilometer nation wide Marathon on 9 December 84 in Singapore, wrote "God is sovereign and health is gift from God. Use it as a vehicle for Christian service, for edification of the saints. This must be the best way to honour God with our body and practical application of offering our very self to God. We must love the Lord our God with all our strength."

Many of the diseases are caused by our carelessness, lack of discipline, over-eating etc. To keep the doctors away is the cheapest and best way. But we are forced to see the doctors. Often even after seeing doctors, if only we listen to their advice regarding dieting, exercise, discipline in life, avoiding smoking and liquor, we can be cured. Often we are compelled to prolong the period of our treatment just because we do not keep ourselves properly disciplined, both physically and mentally.

As Christians it is our duty not only to be spiritually sound and mentally sharp, but also to be physically fit. As a matter of fact many of Christians are neither spiritually sound nor physically fit. Let us make an effort to acquire both these qualities. Let us begin this from today. Perhaps tomorrow may never come.

Nov-Dec 1985

66

USE YOUR TALENTS

It was Thomas Wolfe who wrote "If a man..... has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded, and won a satisfaction and a triumph few men ever know." When we look around us we find a lot of people complaining that opportunities are not available for them to use their talents. They say that circumstances are not favourable for them to develop their talents. There is some truth in such complaints.

Nevertheless, there is no justification for a human being to put all the blame on others or circumstances, because there are people who struggle hard to survive and to develop their talents in spite of adverse circumstances. There is a great lack of initiative amongst us and a lethargy. Some are willing to be satisfied with what we have. Others are trying to resort to illegal and unethical practices to attain higher personal goals in their lives.

Jesus Christ taught us not to hide our talents. A Christian should never be lazy. He should always be busy doing good and realise the dignity of labour. He should strive to develop all his talents in a fair manner. Such a struggle is necessary not only for his own good, but also for the good of the Church or the society in which he lives.

Remember these words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:14-15 "You are the light of world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house."

Jan-Feb 1986

67

WHAT KIND OF UNITY?

The visit of Pope John Paul II and Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, to India in Feb 1986 has posed an old question of the unity of the various Christian denominations. What was the impact of the visits of these two high ecclesiastical dignitaries to India where there are about 24 million Christians.

The majority of the Indian Christians traces their origin back to the missionary labours of the Protestant missionaries like William Carey in the North and Ziegenbalg in the South or tó the Roman Catholic missionary activities of St. Francis Xavier and others in the 16th century. But about six million Christians mainly in Kerala trace their origin back to the Apostle Thomas to 52 A.D. About half the number of these Syrian Christians is in the Catholic Church known as Syro- Malabar and Syro-Malankara. The other half belongs to the Syrian Orthodox, the Orthodox Syrian, the Mar Thoma, the Chaldean Syrian, and the Independent Syrian Church.

The visit of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury made the Christian leaders re-think of the sin of separation and the deep divisions. Although justifications were found for the state of disunity among the Christians it was a time of search for the roots of divisions.

Although no advance was made in the path of organizational unity as a result of the visit of the Pope and the Archbishop to India, let us hope that greater co-operation among the Christian Churches will take place in years to come.

Mar-Apr 1986

68

MUSIC WILL NOT PERISH

There is a German song sung as a round, set to F major scale, 3/4 timing which goes like this

"All things shall perish under the sky:
Music alone shall live, Music alone shall live
Music alone shall live, Never to die."

No doubt in Germany music never dies. People sing folk songs, love songs, hymns, operas etc. which enrich the variety of their talents. Operas composed by the famous Richard Wagner, Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, Messiah of George Handel, compositions of famous composers like Johann Sebastian Bach, Mozart, Franz Schubert et al come from the Germans. Even the famous Christmas song of "Silent Night, Holy Night" came from the German original Stille Nacht, Heilege Nacht written by Fr. Joseph Mohr and was set to music by Franz Gruber in 1818.

"A mighty fortress is our God" is considered one of the greatest hymns of all time. It was composed by Martin Luther (1483-1546), the reformer who set the sacred words of Psalm 46 to a secular folk tune. Children sang it in schools and older people at their work.

In the East Syrian Church there are many beautiful hymns and chants. No effort was done to preserve the tunes and to practise the existing melodies. The Great Mar Aprem (d.373) taught children devotional songs and introduced chanting in the church. Let us try to preserve the songs and improve the standard of singing.

May 1986

69

WRITE ON AND ON

Nobel laureate William Golding when he visited Kerala, India in March 1987 was asked to give his message to the aspiring young writers. He replied, "Keep going. Write on and on and on. Never stop. Never give up."

When the price of paper and the cost of printing go up, some give up. Because it is difficult to find publishers when a beginner's manuscript is ready. Of course a Nobel laureate like Golding does not have such a problem. But young writers have such problems. Yet his advice is good and aspiring young writers should not give up, even if they get several rejection slips.

Good Christian writers are very few. Those Christian writers whose writings are meant for Christian readers receive very little encouragement and remuneration. The number of copies of books with Christian values is always very small compared to the books in the secular market. The Christian periodicals do not have wide readership.

Although no easy solution is possible for such problems, writers committed to moral ideals should write on and on, whether in Christian periodicals or secular publications. "Never stop. Never give up." Golding's advice should be a golden rule to young writers.

March 1987

70

MENTAL STARVATION

"Murdering our minds through mental starvation should be made a criminal offence" is an observation made in an editorial in Impact bimonthly (October-November 1986) published from Singapore. How true it is that in most countries our reading habit is declining. In some affluent nations men have found refuge in the television which the same editorial says, is "more sedative than a stimulant."

We often have the excuse that there is no time to read. If there is no time to read, we should try to create time by choosing priorities for our lives. The lazy man has also got a 24 hour day. But by the careful management of time the busy man finds time to accomplish more than double the work the lazy man does.

It is not merely the speed of doing things. Plan our time schedule. Make necessary adjustments after fixing priorities. Try to wake up half an hour earlier than we do now. One need not be a 'workaholic'. We need not work 18 hours a day as some busy people do.

When the reading habit becomes an integral part of our living, we should take care to see that good books are read. We should read the Holy Bible and many other devotional books. By filling our minds with faith, we are not getting any benefit. Let us not have too many thoughts; for some of them are immoral and base thoughts. Not only spiritual but secular writings must be read. But whatever we read should have literary standards and contain the right information.

July 1987

71

IRAQ-IRAN PEACE

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on July 17 offered Iran peace after nearly eight years of war in the Gulf.

In a nationwide speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the ruling Baath Party's rise to power and the 30th anniversary of the July revolution which toppled the Iraqi Monarchy, President Hussein said :

"We today extend our hands for an honourable peace....."

Hussein reiterated Iraq's commitment to UN Security Council resolution 598 ordering a ceasefire in the Gulf War, and accused some states, which he did not name, of "trying to rearrange the sequence of the resolution's items to meet their own ambitious goals."

Hussein said the correct path to peace should be based on five "clear and obvious principles" which he reiterated as including a total and unconditional withdrawal to international borders, an exchange of prisoners of war, signing of a peace and non-aggression agreement, non intervention by each country in the other's internal affairs, and both countries pledge to "maintain a positive element for establishing security and stability in the area, especially in the Gulf region."

On 18 July Iran agreed to obey the UN Security Council Resolution on ceasefire. Let us hope ceasefire will come and the present Iran-Iraq war will end before it celebrates its eighth anniversary in September.

August 1988

72

ELECTIONS

It is indeed a healthy practice to have periodical elections to the various posts in the Church. In line with the democratic principles, we have elections every year for the trustees of the parishes. The election of the four Central Trustees takes place only once in three years. The voters' lists are updated before December every year.

Although elections give an opportunity to the members of the Church to express their opinion through the secret ballot, sometimes several members do not take it seriously. Only a minority take part in the elections. People are not interested. This indifference may lead at times to the election of some unworthy people. It will be good if more than half people exercise their voting right.

We should discourage money being spent on canvassing for candidates or for false propaganda by printing leaflets or spending money on fireworks for jubilation. Liquor is also used for canvassing or celebrations of election victory. In secular elections this is the case. Political parties cannot decrease the election budget. It is a question of their survival. They are anxious to grab power. In the Church such positions do not promise any monetary merits. Hence there is no use of spending money. At any rate canvassing done for money cannot be justified in Church election. Let us hope that elections in the Churches will not deteriorate into noisy and wasteful shows.

Jan-Feb 1989

73

CHURCH IN THE SOCIETY

Recent Changes in many countries giving increasing involvement of the church in the affairs of the state. A catholic priest became a minister in the government of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. Two Lutheran clergymen have become ministers in East Germany. In many East European countries after communism was overthrown, Churches have started playing an active role in the affairs of the society.

The meeting between Michael Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II was not just a working meeting of the leaders of the two states involved in the Helsinki process, but it was a sign of religion and socialism coming closer, giving up their antagonism to each other.

Regular Christian programmes are permitted on Soviet television. Hannu Hanukka, a Finnish missionary, was granted permission to do TV programmes.

There is a feeling now in many Socialist countries that religious awareness should not be condemned. The New Times, May 29 - June 4, 1990 concludes their article on 'Ideology', *'Renewing Christ and Marx,'* to quote:

"Unless they are bolstered up by moral imperatives, no economic or political reforms will succeed. Along with implementing these reforms there is today more need than ever for the education of public consciousness to the awareness that people would never arrive at the desired order and well-being without a civil peace."

May people turn to God and bring peace on earth.

August 1990

74

RELIGIOUS HARMONY

The recent events in India should make all of us think of the essence of religious teachings. Did the religious leaders teach us to fight, to pull down the places of worship of others?

The killings that take place in India in the name of God should be condemned. No God would be pleased to find the believers killing in the name of religions. We should love each other.

In a country like India where many religions are followed it is absolutely necessary to teach the message of religious harmony. The Muslims should join their Christian neighbours to celebrate Christmas. Similarly Christian leaders should be invited to participate in the celebrations on the birth day of Prophet Muhammad. These occasions help us to know more about the religions of our neighbours.

The Sikh people in Punjab, the Muslims in Kashmir, and the Christians in the North East India should co-exist with Hindu minorities in their neighbourhood. Similarly in other areas the Hindu majority should be friendly with the minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Parsees, etc.

Many rallies are being held in various parts of our nation in order to foster closer harmony among believers of the various religions. India's long tradition of religious tolerance should guide our actions today.

Sep-Oct 1990

75

ASSASSINATIONS

The heinous act of assassinating Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, is an indication of the cruel direction in which the present world is moving. Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead in 1948. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her own body guards in 1984. Now Indira Gandhi's son and successor as Prime Minister was blasted by the bomb attached to the belt of a lady who garlanded him and touched his feet.

The sad news of this cruel murder of 21 May 1991 sent shock waves all over the world. Where is democracy taking us to? What is the protection and security to the lives of the political leaders whose contact with the people is inevitable? How much money is each country spending for the security of the political leaders? It is imperative that violence should be curbed immediately in our society.

The death of a leader in the prime of his youth has been condemned by people from all walks of life in India and abroad. Let us all work for a society where a public figure can walk in the streets without the aid of the security. Such a situation is good for the people too, as they can go to meet their leaders without going through the rigorous security checks to which the public is subjected to. Can one get into an aeroplane without subjecting oneself to the annoying security check?

Violence should be condemned. We should refrain from committing all kinds of violent acts and uttering all sorts of violent words.

May-June 1991

76

ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

A Theological conference was held at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam on October 9-12, 1991.The theme of the conference was Ecclesial Communion. Scholars from all over India and abroad presented papers.

Cardinal Antony Padiyara of Ernakulam, Cochin, inaugurated the Seminar presided over by Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorius. It was obvious that there is a desire to see the different Christian denominations work in closer co-operation. As the second Vatican Council put it the relation of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), one in three or three in one, could be taken as model for the ecclesial communion.

When 318 fathers met at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. they did not think of denominational differences. In the early centuries there were no different denominations. Is it possible for the Churches today to go back to that relationship which the Christians cultivated in the early centuries? We are first and our denominational affiliation comes only next. It is absolutely essential in India in the context of the minority status of the Christian community. Our ecumenical journey should not end where we are now. We should make better attempts in order to be one in Christ. Let us earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit may guide all concerned, whether clergy or laity, to think more of the similarities that unite us than the differences that divide the body of Christ.

Sep-Oct 1991

77

SOVIET ASSYRIANS

We greet the Assyrians in the Soviet Union in this special issue. We are publishing a portion of the small book "A Soviet Assyrian in India" written by Mrs. Nadya Davidova of Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR, an Assyrian lady aged about 54.

During the last century there were attempts by some Assyrians to unite the Christians in Russia. After the treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828 many Assyrians in Persia found employment in the neighbouring villages around Erivan. The Assyrians and the Russians came to be closer. The Assyrian Bishop of Bisho, Urmiyah sent a petition to St. Petersburg with a view to unite with the Russian Orthodox Church.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 Russia did her best to get the support of the Assyrians. In May 1914 the Russians reoccupied Urmiah. In July 1915 the Russians retreated again. By the beginning of 1916 the Russians again controlled Erzerum, Van, Bitles, Trabizond and the territory south of Kurdistan.

In 1916 the Russians helped the Assyrian refugees of Hakkari. Agha Patrus and his Assyrian army worked with the Russians. In the summer of the 1917 the Kerensky government ordered Bavetoff to withdraw all Russian forces from Persian territories. In December 1917 the Russians and the Turks reached the agreement of Brest- Litovsk.

Today the Assyrians in the Soviet Union may be around forty thousand.

Nov-Dec 1991

78

WORDS & WORDS

Preachers and politicians are men of words. Politicians have plenty of words, promises for 'a new world order.' In order to get votes from the people they have to use words, although often both the speaker and the listener know very well that these words are hollow.

But what about the preacher? He is not on any election campaign. He uses words in sermons and liturgy. Do they mean anything to the congregation? Or, do the preacher and the congregation consider them, to be hollow words? Edger Guest's comment should shake the preachers when he says : "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day."

An American preacher, a humourist, William Willimon of Duke University, has written about a girl in his congregation who decided to quit her Pharmacy school in order to be a missionary. The girl's father, shocked by the girl's decision asked the pastor to advise her against her sudden and unwise decision. When the preacher telephoned to her she replied that her decision was in obedience to his preaching. After a silence, the preacher said, "Now look, Anne I was just preaching."

Are our sermons today just preaching? Are we serious about the words we utter? Do we expect our hearers to change? Preacher's words should be more than mere words.

February 1992

79

REPRINTS

Despite the tremendous progress in publishing brought about by computer printing, some useful books of lishana athieqa (old language) are beyond the reach of the people. It is not easy to publish three volumes of Hudra as it has a total of 4000 pages. Moreover, the cost of such printing may be beyond the reach of ordinary people around the world, except the Assyrians in America and Australia.

The Mar Narsai Press established in 1926 in Trichur, Kerala, India, by the untiring efforts of late lamented Metropolitan, Mar Abimalek Timotheus (1878-1945) has come forward to make reprints of Thurgama, Hudra, Thaksa of Qurbana, and Baptism as well as Siamiedha books. The re-prints are made by off-set printing in Trichur (not at Mar Narsai Press, as it does not have an offset machine.)

Already published is the book printed first in 1924 in Mosul by Deacon (later priest) Joseph de Kellaitha at the Assyrian Press. It is called Rushma d Qiryane, i.e. the lectionary. The first edition brought out 500 copies, printed with the help of Deacon Nimrod Rassam. It has 88 pages. The other book which is bound as one volume is a book of 184 pages printed in 1926 at Mosul in the same press. It is called Thurgama u Thakhsa damshamshanutha u Soghiatha. The 1926 edition had 1000 copies. Although Mar Narsai Press in 1974 printed Thurgama and Qiryana portions, it too went out of print.

May-Jun 1992

80

SMOKING

As the result of the recent revelations regarding the side effects of smoking there has been considerable improvement i.e. there is decrease in the number of smokers in the world. Many people realise that smoking is injurious to health, a fact even the cigarette manufacturers admit though reluctantly.

Although the number of smokers in the industrialised countries has gone down by 1.1 percent, in India it has gone up by 2.1 percent. It is a pity that many poor Indians waste their hard earnings for smoking and thereby contract many diseases. If the Indian smokers give up smoking like the western countries the number of deaths due to heart disease will definitely come down.

Every cigarette one smokes shortens his life by 5½ minutes. One who smokes 20 cigarettes a day has the chance of heart attack twice more than a non-smoker. Indians take 1.9 puffs of a cigarette per minute. If it is a locally made Bidi, the average is 4.7 puffs.

The number of Indians who die of heart attack is 2.4 millions, of which 1.8 die before reaching the hospital. More males than females die of heart attack. 40% of the heart patients are under 50. There are many causes for heart diseases. Not only smoking and drinking but also other ailments such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and lack of exercise contribute to the cardiac arrest.

Jan-Feb 1993

81

CHURCH IN SRI LANKA

There are 1.3 million Christians in Sri Lanka in a population of 17.2 million. Sixty-nine percent are Buddhists. 15% are Hindus. Christians and Muslims account for 8% each.

Roman Catholics form the major Christian denomination having more than a million members. Among the Protestants, the Anglicans are the first and the Methodists take the second position. Among minor Protestant denominations there are Baptists, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, C.S.I. and others.

It is generally believed that the Roman Catholics brought the Christian gospel. But the historical fact is that centuries before the Portuguese first landed in Sri Lanka in 1502 A.D. there were Christian Churches in that island.

The Persian Cross preserved in Anuradhapura museum dating back to 600 A.D. is an indisputable piece of evidence to show that Christianity was in Sri Lanka (earlier known as Ceylon) in the 6th century. Cosmas Indicopleustes who travelled in south India between 520 and 525 and wrote his travelogue called Christian Topography states :

"In the island of Taprobane in Inner India where the India sea is, a Church of Christians with clergy and congregation of believers as well as in the land called Male where pepper grows" More research is necessary to find out how the Church in Sri Lanka vanished after 600 A.D.

Sep-Oct 1993

82

TRANSLATIONS

Ever since the ancient Church of the East began to spread into the English speaking areas the need for translations of the liturgical texts has always been keenly felt. The new generation of Assyrians born and brought up in England, America and Australia do not understand Aramaic, the liturgical language of the Church.

In India Malayalam translations are available for all liturgical services such as Qurbana, Baptism, Marriage and Funeral. But even in India some members have moved out of Kerala state where Malayalam is spoken, to Madras where Tamil is used or to North India where Hindi is spoken. Therefore translation in Malayalam alone would not do.

The English translation of liturgical services such as Qurbana and Baptism was printed in Mar Narsai Press in 1967 and a reprint in offset is likely to come out this year. The marriage and funeral services were not easily available. It is a must today. Moreover not only Assyrians but their neighbours in England, U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand are attending the weddings and funerals of their Assyrian friends.

Holy Matrimony is published in this issue. It is an abridged version from the translation by the Revd. Goerge Percy Badger, The Nestorians and Their Rituals, Vol. II published in 1852. Hope this is a small beginning that will benefit all the members of our Church in India and abroad.

Jan-Feb 1994

83

READ YOUR BIBLE

The knowledge of the Holy Bible is very poor among Christians of mainline Churches. Young people have many other books of novels, detective stories etc. for their reading. Christians should be ashamed of their lack of knowledge of the only book which teaches morality, good behaviour etc. and lead them to an abundant living.

Only 4% of the Christians read the Bible daily. About 54% of those who attend Church (once a week) read the Bible. These are the figures from a recent survey conducted by Barna Research Ltd. U.S.A.

Still more revealing is the following information from Barna's Omni Poll. With the increase of wealth, Bible reading habit declines. 54% of those who earn less than $20,000 per year read the Bible. But only 30% of those who earn more than $60,000 per year read the Bible. It is wealth that robs people's interest in reading the Bible.

On the other hand the increase of educational achievements, marital status, or urban or rural life styles do not affect the habit of reading the Bible seriously.

Let us Christians make a decision to read the Bible regularly and grow in grace of God day by day.

Mar-Apr 1994

84

PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN

Many parents are afraid of their children. Many mothers pray for their children so that they may grow in the grace of God. Some parents dedicate their children to God even before they are born.

We will question the wisdom and the legal right of the parents to decide the destiny of their offsprings. But it is true that parents cannot be justified in keeping quiet and letting children grow on their own to shape their own destiny. Sometimes it will be too late to help them to grow in the proper manner.

St. Augustine's mother Monica prayed for her son who lived a drunken immoral life. Monica never gave up praying even after her son became 31 years old. She asked others also to pray for her son. She persevered in prayer. Finally Augustine became a Christian, a great saint remembered by both Eastern and Western Churches.

Mothers, Fathers, pray for your children. Give them pieces of advice. Give them the pleasure of your company. Save them before they become addicts to TV and worldly pleasures. If they do not come to the church, run from pillar to post to get them in the Church at least occasionally. Let us all pray for our children and the youth so they may love the Lord Jesus Christ.

May-Jun 1994

85

A CHALLENGE

A stay of two days at the St. Ephrem's Ecumenical Research Institute (S E E R I), Kottayam, Kerala on 3rd and 4th October 1994 was a challenge to the clergy of the Church of the East in India. Showing around the air conditioned library of this Research Institute Fr. Jacob Thakeparambil, Director of SEERI and Fr. Geevarghese Panicker, Associate Director put a challenge to our clergy to study and propagate our heritage. They showed photo copies of the English translation made by Mingana, Sebastian Brock and others and invited our clergy to make use of this treasure of our heritage.

The Protestant and Catholic scholars have studied our Syriac books on liturgy, faith etc. What about us? asked they. There are several scholars in the Syrian Churches in India. But they do not show any interest in studying our heritage. We go to study western theology. Many in Kerala go to study Protestant theologians. They have but little familiarity with Syrian theologians such as St. Ephrem (Mar Aprem), Aphrahat and others, he lamented. They asked our clergy to study these books and also to take academic courses recently recognized by the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.

SEERI is the only centre recognized by the University to prepare candidates for Ph.D. in the Syriac language and literature. A 2-year M.A. Course is approved. There is a certificate course of 3 months (under the Distance Education Programme of the University) for those who do not have prior academic qualification.

Sep-Oct 1994

86

DEVOTIONAL SONGS

Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Indian nation, was a Hindu. But he liked to sing some Christian songs. His five favourite songs were broadcast by All India Radio in Bangalore on October 2, his birthday. They are....

1. Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
   Lead Thou me on....
2. Rock of Ages, cleft for me.....
3. When I survey the wonderous Cross
   on which the Prince of glory died,
   My richest gain I count but loss,
   And pour contempt on all my pride.
4. Take my life and let it be consecrated
   Lord to Thee....
5. Nearer my God to Thee....

Gandhi knew that these songs were written by western Christians. In South Africa and later in India this British educated Barrister fought against the British masters. But he did not hate the British Christians. He drew inspiration from Jesus Christ especially from the Sermon on the Mount and other passages of the Holy Gospel.

He sang these songs in a real spirit of prayer realising the meaning fully. May these songs appeal to us as we happen to hear them and meditate upon them.

Nov-Dec 1994

87

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The World Summit for Social Development scheduled to meet in Copenhagen, Denmark on March 6-12, 1995 is to focus attention on poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The United Nations took the initiative to bring together the leaders of the world, because it is the crying concern of all nations.

There is poverty and unemployment even in such advanced countries as England, the U.S.A. The number of billionaires is increasing in the U.S.A. But the number of the poor and the unemployed is also increasing. All countries should seriously plan individually and jointly to reduce poverty in the world.

At the tide of global economic and technological changes many employed people lost their employment even in affluent countries. It is high time that the voluntary organisations and governments should work together to diffuse the social crises humanity faces today. The rich and the powerful should vow to work to help the poor.

The debt-trap is terrible. In the low-income sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Nigeria) the debt has increased to 44 billion dollars in 1992, more than a quarter of the total debt of 163 billion dollars. We can hope that the strategies that will be drafted in the Summit will be implemented in order to mobilise the resources and make social development a reality.

Jan-Feb 1995

88

BA'UTHA OF THE NINEVITES

The three day fast observed in the 5th week after Epiphany is known as Ba'utha de Ninevaye. Ba'utha means request or rogation. Hence this three day fast is known as Rogation of the Ninevites.

This is called so because it was in the time of Prophet Jonah the people of Nineveh fasted for 40 days to escape the wrath that was prophesied against them. Jonah cried, "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4) Therefore the people of Nineveh proclaimed "a fast, and put on sack cloth, from the greatest of them" (3:5) Thus God did not destroy Nineveh.

The observance of Ba'utha began when there was a plague in the days of Metropolitan Mar Savreesho of Beth Slogh in Persia. So he asked his congregation to fast and pray. After three days this plague departed from the worshippers. By the 5th day the plague was controlled and cured. Consequently Metropolitan Mar Savreesho proclaimed that people should fast and pray every year on this occasion. Thus Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, as well as Thursday should be observed. Thursday is a day of Thanks giving (Qubal thaibutha)

Let us pray to God to heal us and help us always both physically and spiritually.

Mar-Apr 1995

89

DEACONESS

The XIIth International Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches took place in Brookline, near Boston, Massachussetts, U.S.A. in the campus of the Hellenic College and the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology from August 20-26, 1995.

The paper presented by the delegate from the Armenian Church was entitled 'Deaconesses in the Armenian Church.' Rev. Dr. Abel Oghlukian began this paper with the words, "The ordination of women is not a novelty in the Church and should not be considered an outcome of the feminist movement of our age. The ordination of women has a long tradition in the Church and there are many references about it upto Apostolic times."

The paper called our attention to the words of St.Paul, "I entrust to you our sister Phebe, who is a servant (=diakonos) of the Church at Cenchreae" St. Paul used the masculine word which in Greek is diakonos instead of the feminine form diakonissa (deaconess). Bible scholars are unanimous that Phoebe was a woman. In Syriac the feminine form of Shamshana is Shamshanitha.

In different denominations the deaconesses acquired various duties and functions. They had some special dress. The deaconesses were mainly for anointing the female adults during their baptism. Now adult baptisms are rare in ancient Churches. It is useful to revive the order of deaconesses and establish nunneries and convents for women in our Church who like to lead a religious life.

Jul-Aug 1995

90

GOOD PRIEST

"Please appoint a good priest to our parish in the next general transfer" is the insistent demand made by many congregations. Every congregation wants an educated and efficient priest.

Garry Wills, a Pulitzer Prize-winner, in his recent book Certain Trumpets remarks : The Call of Leaders identifies sixteen types of leaders : electoral, radical, reform, diplomatic, military, charismatic, business, traditional, constitutional, intellectual, Church, sports, artistic, rhetorical, opportunistic and saintly. The author has also quoted on the frontispiece of this book I Corinthians 14:8 "For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"

President Thomas W. Gillespie of my alma mater, Princeton Theological Seminary, observed in his opening Convocation Address on 13 September 1994.

"The Church needs ministerial leadership that does not get marbles in the mouth when it speaks of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and of faith and redemption and hope. The Church needs ministerial leadership that will trumpet a clear and certain sound in its preaching, and in its pastoral care."

May God help us to get priests and bishops who have some of the above qualities so that they may be able to lead the people entrusted to their care.

Sep-Oct 1995

91

UNITY IN INDIA

The restoration of unity in the Church of the East in India was reported in the Sep-Oct issue of the Voice of the East. Details were not included in the last issue as that issue (except the cover page) was already printed before the unity talks made good progress.

The unity achieved in November 1995 was the result of an agreement made in India. What many wanted for long was the unity of the universal Church. Although efforts were made prior to the election of H.H. Mar Khanania Dinkha IV as Patriarch in October 1976 in England it did not materialise. Then efforts were made immediately after the consecration of the Patriarch in 1976 itself.

Both the Patriarchs met in 1980 in Bagdad in 1984 in Chicago and in 1990 again in England. The peace committee appointed by both synods in 1990 in Bagdad could not achieve much. So the Church in India went ahead and made unity in India. After 32 years of division since January 1964, the clergy and laity felt that it was meaningless to fight. Hence the two groups were re-united and civil suits were withdrawn.

All people in India – both Christians and non–Christians say : "It was right and just to do so." *Yaye u zadeq* as we recite in the Holy Qurbana.

Amen.

Nov-Dec 1995

92

STUDYING CHURCH HISTORY

One of the shortcomings of American Seminary students is their preoccupation with modernity" observed Thomas W. Gillespie, President of the Princeton Theological Seminary, in his opening convocation Address in September 1995. He elaborated thus :

"A person can be a scientist without knowing the history of science. Such is not the case with theological science, however. People in our ecclesial past may know God in ways that we do not and cannot know God apart from what they have to tell us. The prophets and the apostles have been recognized by the church as such people, and that is why their writings have been canonized as sacred scriptures."

The learned President of the Princeton Seminary elaborated his point.

"Another blind spot of American Christianity is the view that between the time of the Bible and our time, nothing of much importance has occurred, at least little that affects our knowledge of God. How naive. History may have been 'bunk' to Henry Ford, but it is vital to Christians. Without the Church, which connects historically our time with biblical times, neither you nor I would be here tonight. The words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "I delivered to you that which I also received" (1 Cor. 15:3), are true of the transmission of the gospel from his generation to ours. We know and think about God because we are the beneficiaries of a long tradition history."

May-Jun 1996

93

POETRY IN WORSHIP

The Church of the East celebrates the liturgy of the holy Apostles, Mar Adhai and Mar Mari. The West Syrians use mainly St. James liturgy. Both liturgies have something in common. St. Aprem (306-373) lived before the formation of denominations or the Christological controversies of 431 and 451 A.D.

Songs written by Mar Narsai (died 503 A.D.), Mar Bawai (VIth Century) and Geevarghese Warda (13th Century) are seen only in the East Syrian tradition, while that of Jacob of Serug (451-521), Severios of Antioch (465-538) and others are found in the West Syrian tradition.

Poetry has a high place in the Aramaic liturgical tradition. Syriac poetry has followed the Hebrew tradition. Syriac poetry is based on meters.

Maran Isho Malka Sghiedha meaning 'Our Lord Jesus worshipful king", sung at the time of giving Qurbana was composed by Saint Mar Aprem. In Hudra we have prayers for evening (Ramsha) night (lilya) and morning (sapra) containing a great deal of soul-stirring poetry. Some are mere chanting.

Ba'utha d'Ninvaye (Rogation of Ninavites) has plenty of poems in addition to the recitation of Mazmora (Psalms) 2/3rd of all Psalms on all three days.

Without poetry there is no liturgical worship in our Church. Let us not forget the rich poetic rituals in our liturgical tradition.

Jul-Aug 1996

94

TITHE

On Nov. 10, 1996 we observe the Sunday of tithes. The Jewish custom was to give one tenth to the Lord. According to Deuteronomy 16:16 the Jewish males had to observe three feasts every year. The feast of the unleavened bread (Passover), the feast of weeks and the feast of booths (Tabernacle). They were commanded not to "appear before the Lord empty-handed."

The Jewish people gradually began to forget their obligations towards God. Prophet Malachi bluntly states, "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, "How are we robbing thee?" In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you." (Malachi 3:8,9)

There are Christians who follow the traditions of their fathers and pay one tenth of their income to the Church and for charitable causes. But in our Church the number of tithing Christians is small. In some Christian Churches there is emphasis for giving one tenth. In our Church in India if all people give at least one hundredth of their income, the Church will not have difficulty in balancing its budget.

Last year the total income from all parishes from both groups did not reach Rs.3,00,000 (equivalent to $9860) This amount is less than what is collected in a single parish in other denominations in Trichur itself. Let us hope that our people will discharge their obligations to the Church.

Sep-Oct 1996

95

HOLY SYNOD

The Holy Synod of the Church of the East is summoned to meet in Chicago from 19-30 June 1997. It is important that the prelates of the Church periodically meet and review the progress of the Church and plan for the future.

This Holy Synod will have to assess the progress of the Pro-Oriente dialogues, the unity dialogues between Vatican and the Church of the East, and between the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV.

It has to plan for the future as the dioceses of Iran and Syria are without episcopas. The see of Iran is vacant after elevation of Bishop of Iran Mar Dinkha as Catholicos Patriarch of our Church in October 1976 in England. The see of Syria is vacant after the demise of Mar Yohannan Episcopa in 1985.

The Synod has to work towards unity with the minority old calendar faction of our Church known as the Ancient Church of the East.

The Church had very active missions in many countries centuries ago. We have to establish and strengthen missions in countries like China, Japan and Sree Lanka. Let all members and friends of the Church of the East pray that God in His omnipotence may guide the prelates of the Church and enable them to serve and preserve it in strength and unity.

Jan-Feb 1997

96

SR. OLGA NOEL

On 15 August 1996 our Church in Bagdad started a convent of Rabbanyatha (nuns). Sr. Olga Noel and two novices are now in our new convent of Marth Mariyam in Bagdad. Let us hope that this would grow. In all our Churches throughout the world this will provide the opportunity for women to be active in our Church.

Although deaconesses are permitted in our Church to assist at the baptism of female adults, we do not have any at present. In India late Deaconess P.K. Mary was very active as the general secretary of women's organization. We need dedicated women to work in orphanages, Homes for the Aged, hospitals etc.

It is not known when was the last convent in our Church. As for men we had Rabban Yonan, deacon of Tkhuma, who died in September 1886 three weeks after receiving the Anglican missionaries, A.J. Maclean and W.H. Browne. A photograph of this last monk of the Assyrians appears on the front cover of J.F. Coakley's book The Church of the East and the Church of England, Oxford, 1992.

Let us hope that the Church of the East will have on the occasion of the first anniversary of the convent of nuns in Bagdad many dedicated nuns and monks who will have the burden of preparing our Church for the 21st century.

Jul-Aug 1997

97

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Although the Holy Bible is still the largest selling book there is very little demand for religious books compared to the secular books. The copies of Bibles are sold in bulk because it is heavily subsidised. Many Bible societies collect donations so that they can sell the Bible at lower price than its actual cost.

But at the same time Christians buy secular books and novels paying the actual cost and even much more. Recently a young lady writer from Kerala got one million dollars (Rs. 3½ crores) for her novel, which she wrote in English. In the secular world the writers as well as publishers compete with each other in making profits, as well as improving the quality of printing.

Christians should change the attitude of expecting to buy Christian books and the Bible at subsidised rates. Some ask for copies of free Bibles. With the increase in production cost readers should be willing to pay more for books. Some don't have reading habits. Others do not want to pay for Christian books. We should realise that if we pay for other books, we should show a greater interest in buying and reading religious books and magazines.

Mar-Apr 1997

98

MOTHER TERESA

Mother Teresa aged 87 passed away on Friday 5 September 1997. Born in Albania near Yugoslavia on 27 August 1910, she came to Darjeeling, India in 1928. As a young Roman Catholic nun Sister Agnes began teaching in Loreta Convent school in Calcutta. She was stunned by the poverty around her and she received an inner call on 10th September 1946 on a train journey to Darjeeling to commit her life to the service of the poor. She founded an Order of Sisters - Missionaries of Charity.

Mother Teresa (formerly Agnes) lived among the poor for the poorest of the poor in India. She spent the early years of her new order only in Calcutta. Then she extended her activities into other parts of India and then to the whole world.

The Templeton Award, the Nobel Prize for Peace and many other prestigious Awards went to her. Fame only steeled her courage and determination. She was humble and was holy by helping the poor and even the ungodly.

Her activities as she served the poor were never aimed at adding to the membership of the nearly one-billion strong world wide Roman Catholic Church. Her service was made available to people of all faiths and even to those who had no faith. Even atheists admired the activities of her Order now carried on in 105 countries through 671 institutions.

Sep-Oct 1997

99

EATING MORE?

Most men and women eat something everyday in order to live. But over-eating causes diseases. We should ask ourselves why we eat more when some people do not have enough to eat.

• An average man or woman needs 2,200 calories daily to avoid malnutrition. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations give us the information that people in most countries take more than 2,200. These extra calories are not only a waste, but also health problems to those who live on extra calories. The 1995 figures are given below.

Country	Calories
U.S.A	3603
Germany	3265
Mexico	3136
Canada	3093
Slovakia	2892
Japan	2887
Brazil	2834
Vietnam	2463

But Kenya goes below the 2,200 minimum. It has gone down to 1991. The average in India is not known to me.

The Christmas season is a time when Christians should examine their conscience and ask themselves whether it is right to spend so much on food and drink.

Nov-Dec 1997

100
CORRUPTION

India, although second largest in the population, is way behind many nations in many respects. In the management of human resources India is ranked 135th only. In case of soccer (football) game India is struggling to reach the 100th place. Yet it is often below 114th. In 1997 it has grown from 120 to 112th place.

In regard to corruption India has scored marks. It holds 8th rank in the world according to Transparency International, Germany. Corruption is found not only in high places but also in the lives of ordinary people.

If a poor man wants to get a poverty certificate he has to pay Rs.100. From where can he get Rs.100? On the other hand if he does not pay it he will not get the certificate and if he does not produce it he cannot get his unemployment benefits. If one wants to get electricity connection to a new house one has to pay Rs.500. If one wants a license to sell liquor one has to pay a higher rate. If one has to bag a contract the bribe is really very big. After the Bofors scandal came under investigation some people use the word Bofors as a synonym for the word bribe.

We have to fight hard against corruption. Politicians and bureaucrats and judges and spiritual leaders should join hands in this crusade against corruption. That is the only way to save India from damnation.

Jan-Feb 1998

101

POULOSE MAR POULOSE

The sad, sudden and premature death of Bishop Poulose Mar Poulose was a shock to many. At the age of 57 he was looking forward to a fruitful career upto 75, the retirement age suggested by the Holy Synod of the Church.

By-pass surgery was prescribed for him after five blocks were detected in his coronary system. He made sure from the doctor that he would be able to play his tennis as before and he was looking forward to do after his recovery. But he died of heart attack while the by-pass surgery was being performed at Apollo Hospital in Chennai.

Born on 14th September 1941 he was ordained a deacon on 21 September 1958 and a priest on 13 June 1965. He was consecrated Bishop on 13 Sept. 1968 in Bagdad.

At 27, he went to Princeton, N.J., U.S.A., and obtained Th.M. degree. After studying at Austin, Texas during 1969-70 he went to San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California which is one of the theological institutions belonging to the Graduate Theological Union of Berkeley. He took his M.A. in 1971 and Th.D. (Doctor of Theology) four years later.

On 1st January 1976 he reached in Trichur, Kerala. He served as Chairman of the World Student Christian Federation (W.S.C.F.) in Geneva.

May his soul rest in peace.

Mar-Apr 1998

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Biographies

1	Mar Thoma Darmo - A Biography	p.p. 214,	197
2	Mar Abimalek Timotheus - A Biography	p.p. 282,	197
3	Mar Abdisho Thondenat	p.p. 136,	198
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14	A Nestorian Bibliography	p.p. 128,	198
15	Indian Christian Who is Who	p.p. 210,	198
16	The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East (ISPCK, Delhi) (out of print)	p.p. 64,	1984
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18	Indian Christian Directory	p.p. 264,	1984
19	Mar Aprem, Theologian & Poet	p.p. 136,	1990

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20	America Revisited	p.p. 148,	1977
21	From Bagdad to Chicago	p.p. 168,	1985
22	Australian Assyrians	p.p. 132,	1988
23	To Belgium and Holland via UK & USA	p.p. 124,	1989
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26	Germany via Vienna	p.p. 140,	1991
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28	London to Moscow	p.p. 134,	1993
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30	Oxford to Austria	p.p. 144,	1994
31	Salzburg to Boston	p.p. 140,	1995
32	Israel, Scandinavia & U.S.A	p.p. 112,	1996
33	Hassake To Hollywood	p.p. 112,	1998

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34	Bishop's Jokes (Reprint 1995)	p.p. 180,	1983
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36	Laugh to Health (C. L. S.,Madras)	p.p. 82,	1992
37	Holy Humour	p.p. 104,	1993
38	Joy to the World	p.p. 104,	1994
39	Holy Smile	p.p. 100,	1997

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41	Teach Yourself Aramaic (Reprint 1993)	p.p. 152,	1981
42	Behold the Cross of Calvary	p.p. 152,	1987
43	Sermons from the Gospels Vol. I	p.p. 208,	1988
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45	The Nestorian Canon Law	p.p. 120,	1995
46	Mesopotamia Light	p.p. 128,	1993
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51	ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കാൽപ്പാടുകളിലൂടെ	p.p. 168,	1985

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52 Assyrian Fathers
53 Syriac Manuscripts in India
54 Poems & Prayers
55 Advanced Aramaic

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